

EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BASED ON REAL OR PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. TOM LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on the night of May 10, 2001, Egyptian police arrested 52 Egyptian men because they frequented a gay night club. Since then, these men have been denied counsel, have been tortured, they have had their reputations attacked, and they have been arraigned on trumped up charges of "obscene behavior" despite the fact that Egypt has no laws expressly criminalizing consensual homosexual behavior. Furthermore, if these men are convicted, under Egypt's Emergency State Security Court system, they will not have the right to appeal and may be sentenced up to nine years in prison. Mr. Speaker, by jailing, torturing, and denying a fair trial to people because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, the Egyptian government once again demonstrates its disregard of the human rights of its citizens, and its willingness to deny them the right of free association and due process.

Egypt is clearly violating the human rights of these 52 men. Reports indicate that these men have been tortured with electroshocks, whipped while in prison, threatened with dogs, and they have been forced to undergo degrading and intrusive examinations designed to "prove" that they have been partners in homosexual relations. Mr. Speaker, the Egyptian government has not only harmed these men physically, but has also sought to hurt their reputations. Their names together with identifying details, such as their professions and places of work were published, and they were publicly labeled as members of a "Satanist" organization.

Mr. Speaker, astonishingly even anti-Semitism has been used to defame the detainees. For example, the pro-government press reported that one of the men "confessed" to being "immersed in Judaism." The alleged leader of the so-called "cult" was shown in an evidently doctored photograph in one newspaper with an Israeli flag on his desk.

The Egyptian government's treatment of these 52 men is indicative of a broad pattern of persecution towards religious and secular dissidents. Often these victims of persecution are members of Islamist political movements whom the government sees as a particular threat. In recent months, however, President Mubarak's government has undertaken a number of well publicized prosecutions aimed at secular dissidents. Most notably, the government imposed a seven-year sentence on Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a noted sociologist, for defaming the Egyptian State—a charge apparently prompted by his activism on behalf of religious tolerance and honest elections.

Mr. Speaker, this repressive intolerance has extended to the international sphere. Egypt led the effort, at the recent United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, to eliminate from the final document all references to vulnerable groups including men who have sex with men, sex workers, and IV-drug users. And Egypt also led the unsuccessful effort to deny the right to speak at the Special Session to the International Gay and Les-

bian Human Rights Commission. Local human rights groups in Egypt have been reluctant to act against many of these abuses—fearful their own precarious situation, facing a determinedly draconian government, will be worsened if they defend stigmatized groups. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, a prominent non-governmental organization, recently fired one of its employees because he pressed them to speak out against the arrests of gay men.

Lawyers have been reluctant to take up the case of these 52 men, fearing their own careers and even freedom could be endangered. The right to legal representation is a basic one, essential to the operations of a free and fair justice system. By creating a climate in which due process is denied to gay men, the Egyptian government has undermined the basic human rights of all Egyptians.

Mr. Speaker, this body must not ignore the Egyptian government's attempts to violate the human rights of individuals based on their real or perceived sexual orientation. The US government and the governments of all countries should stand up and be counted against Egypt's growing record of intolerance and inhumanity. Our distinguished colleague from Massachusetts Mr. Frank and I, along with 34 of our colleagues are sending a letter to President Mubarak to express our very strong disapproval of the arrest of 52 men in Egypt on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation.

Mr. Speaker, human rights are universal. These basic rights affirm our shared humanity; they should not be applied unequally according to prejudice and fear. We must not let the Egyptian government's rejection of basic human rights go unnoticed.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO DIXIE LUKE

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor and congratulate Dixie Luke for teaching English and social studies to seventh and eighth grade students for thirty years. After providing a positive influence for hundreds of students in their most critical years, she has decided to move on from the teaching profession.

Dixie is a longtime Colorado resident—she was born in Hotchkiss, Colorado, and has lived in Glenwood Springs for thirty years. Even now she returns almost daily to her birthplace to build the foundation for her next adventure, which involves making sheep's milk cheese, including the caring for the sheep. She also plans on planting a nearby vineyard.

In addition to teaching a more traditional English and social studies curriculum, Dixie used an interdisciplinary unit to give her students a different perspective on learning. One example involved taking students on a day trip to Meeker in order to relate literature to real life. The class first read *The Hay Meadow*, by Gary Paulson, which is about a boy in Wyoming who has to go to high country to spend a summer working with sheep. Dixie explained that many of her students are from cities and don't have the personal experience to help them relate to the novel's setting. The class

then visited the sheep dog trials in Meeker, where they were able to watch the highly trained sheep dogs perform several maneuvers. Another example of a favorite part of the job is the "Mosaic" project, which involves teaching the students to use fourteen different reference sources, and then to cite them.

While she is an old hand at working with kids, in the past few years, she has discovered a few new enjoyable aspects of the job. For instance, she says the results of new CSAP testing have provided more verification for how much her students have been learning. "The Glenwood Springs Middle School had the highest reading and writing scores in the district," she proudly explained, and those scores are also well above the State average. "I always thought that we were preparing the kids well, and it was fun to start seeing those results." Also, during her last five or six years of teaching, Dixie has enjoyed working with new teachers. One fun thing is "helping young teachers . . . to work with the kids in the classroom in a successful way," she said.

Mr. Speaker, Dixie Luke has been a fantastic teacher for thirty years. She has committed herself to her students and has helped to equip them with the education and confidence vital for their success. I would like to thank her for her longtime dedication, and I wish her luck on her next adventure.

LEGISLATION WHICH ENHANCES SENIOR CITIZENS' HEALTH CARE

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation which enhances senior citizens' ability to control their health care and use Medicare money to pay for prescription drugs. This legislation accomplishes these important goals by removing the numerical limitations and sunset provisions in the Medicare Medical Savings Account (MSA) program so that all seniors can take advantage of the Medicare MSA option.

Medicare MSAs consist of a special savings account containing Medicare funds for seniors to use for their routine medical expenses, including prescription drug costs. Seniors in a Medicare MSA program are also provided with a catastrophic insurance policy to cover non-routine expenses such as major surgery. Under an MSA plan, the choice of whether to use Medicare funds for prescription drug costs, or other services not available under traditional Medicare such as mammograms, are made by the senior, not by bureaucrats and politicians.

One of the major weaknesses of the Medicare program is that seniors do not have the ability to use Medicare dollars to cover the costs of prescription medicines, even though prescription drugs represent the major health care expenditure for many seniors. Medicare MSAs give those seniors who need to use Medicare funds for prescription drugs the ability to do so without expanding the power of the federal bureaucracy or forcing those seniors who currently have prescription drug coverage into a federal one-size-fits-all program.

Medicare MSAs will also ensure seniors access to a wide variety of health care services

by minimizing the role of the federal bureaucracy. As many of my colleagues know, an increasing number of health care providers have withdrawn from the Medicare program because of the paperwork burden and constant interference with their practice by bureaucrats from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (previously known as the Health Care Financing Administration). The MSA program frees seniors and providers from the this burden thus making it more likely that quality providers will remain in the Medicare program!

Mr. Speaker, the most important reason to enact this legislation is seniors should not be treated like children and told what health care services they can and cannot have by the federal government. We in Congress have a duty to preserve and protect the Medicare trust fund and keep the promise to America's seniors and working Americans, whose taxes finance Medicare, that they will have quality health care in their golden years. However, we also have a duty to make sure that seniors can get the health care that suits their needs, instead of being forced into a cookie cutter program designed by Washington-DC-based bureaucrats! Medicare MSAs are a good first step toward allowing seniors the freedom to control their own health care.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to provide our senior citizens greater control of their health care, including the ability to use Medicare money to purchase prescription drugs by cosponsoring my legislation to expand the Medicare MSA program.

RECOGNIZING THE OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONALISM AND PERFORMANCE OF THE U.S. DELEGATION TO THE 53RD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, an often overlooked hallmark of our democracy is the smooth transition of power from administration to administration. This seamless transfer is made possible only through the dedication and hard work of countless numbers of career Federal employees. Often underappreciated and maligned by the public, these career bureaucrats effectively carry out the day to day functions of the Federal Government for the benefit of the American public both at home and abroad.

In this respect, the recent performance of the U.S. delegation to the 53rd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in London exemplifies the type of excellence in public service for which we can all be proud. Considering that several highly contentious issues came before the plenary, the Bush administration is to be commended for sending nothing less than a topnotch team to London. And I applaud the decision of this administration to maintain longstanding U.S. policies that uphold the responsible protection and conservation of the world's cetaceans, especially large whales. Strong U.S. leadership will be vital to thwart future attempts to reverse global whale conservation measures put for-

ward by pro-whaling nations as part of their determined strategy to undermine the IWC. This administration must remain vigilant, and a very brief summation of the issues that arose at this year's meeting will help explain why.

Perhaps the most contentious issue which emerged in London was the proposal by Iceland to rejoin the IWC. In 1992 Iceland, a whaling nation, withdrew from the IWC in part due to the adoption by the IWC of a global moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. Iceland intended to rejoin the IWC this year but with a reservation against the moratorium. While supportive of Iceland rejoining the IWC, the U.S. delegation strongly, and rightly, opposed the reservation arguing that it would have established, if accepted, a harmful precedent with significant repercussions affecting the adherence of treaty obligations by nations under virtually any international agreement. Such a precedent could severely disrupt the framework of U.S. foreign policy.

Iceland was re-admitted but denied voting rights in the plenary, a decision which sparked significant controversy. Undoubtedly, hard feelings generated in the plenary will linger. Yet the administration was correct in its position. And while it is important for the administration to attempt to restore amicable relations with the Government of Iceland, it should remain clear in communicating its opposition to Iceland's reservation against the global moratorium.

Another item of controversy was the maintenance of lethal scientific research whaling conducted by the Government of Japan in the Southern and North Pacific Oceans. Since 1987, Japan has exploited a loophole in the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) to maintain whaling under the auspices of self-administered scientific lethal whale research permits in the Southern and North Pacific Oceans. Over 700 minke whales have been taken annually. In 2000, Japan expanded this program to include sperm and Bryde's whales; both species are listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Japan's recalcitrance in the face of world opinion to continue this lethal research whaling—a practice which the IWC's own Scientific Committee has ruled consistently to be unnecessary for the management and conservation of whale stocks—led to the Clinton administration's decision last year to certify Japan as in violation of the Pelly Amendment to the Fisherman's Protective Act, and to consider retaliatory economic sanctions on Japanese fishery products. The 68 members of Congress who have agreed to cosponsor my resolution, H. Con. Res. 180, strongly oppose such "scientific whaling," and we very much appreciate the decision of the Bush administration to join us in robust opposition to this illegitimate scheme.

Newer and much lower abundance estimates for Southern Hemisphere minke whale populations helped persuade the IWC plenary, led by the U.S. delegation, to again pass this year a resolution condemning Japan's controversial research and calling on Japan to refrain from continuing these programs. But regrettably, Japan appears unwilling to discontinue or even scale back this illegal whaling contrivance. Should the Japanese decide to again move forward, the administration should re-certify Japan as in violation to the Pelly amendment and this time impose real

sanctions. The administration should also continue to engage with Japan in the development of new and better non-lethal scientific methods to obtain data to study whale populations.

Another issue adroitly handled by the U.S. delegation was the emerging question of whether the decline in some global commercial fisheries is linked to a corresponding increase in the consumption of fish by recovering whale populations. In its efforts to justify the resumption of commercial whaling, Japan has postulated a simplistic theory: world fisheries are depleted due to increased foraging by increasing numbers of whales. Moreover, this theory is used conveniently by the Japanese to justify the necessity of its lethal scientific whaling programs. Recently, Japan and other nations have promoted this concept in other international fisheries organizations, such as the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries (COFI). This tactic has raised concerns within and outside of the IWC that the organization is being undercut in an area within its competence.

The U.S. delegation rightly maintained that the competition claim is grossly oversimplified and biologically unsound. Nevertheless, the U.S. delegation considered it necessary for the issue to be held within the IWC—the one international organization recognized for the management of whale stocks. As a result, while remaining emphatically opposed to lethal scientific whaling and skeptical of the competition theory, the U.S. delegation prudently reached agreement with Japan on a resolution, subsequently adopted by the plenary, that lays out how the IWC will address the question of competition between whales and fisheries in the immediate future. In essence, this resolution acknowledged the competence of the IWC in this area and urged the IWC to engage with FAO and other regional fisheries management organizations to initiate relevant ecosystem-based, holistic and balanced research to investigate this theory.

Representatives of the environmental community objected to this strategy arguing that it legitimized "junk science" and that it was an ill-advised concession to Japan. And time might very well verify those concerns. But at the moment, I agree with the decision of the U.S. delegation that accurate, balanced and non-lethal scientific research offers perhaps the best opportunity to expose the scientific flaws and gaps of this questionable theory once and for all. The U.S. must maintain a strong presence on the IWC Scientific Committee and in the activities of other regional fisheries management organizations to ensure that objectivity is maintained.

I commend the U.S. delegation for its continued efforts to develop a consensus for a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) to govern the future governance of whaling. The U.S. delegation rightly maintained that the RMS must be addressed comprehensively, and not through a piecemeal approach. Despite the fact that little progress was made to resolve difficult issues concerning transparency, supervision and control, the U.S. delegation remained engaged with all nations in an attempt to bridge differences. What has become clear is that the lack of progress on the RMS rests squarely on the shoulders of the pro-whaling bloc led by Japan and Norway, and not on the U.S. and its like-minded allies.