

State Department in 1915 saying that the, "deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eye witnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion."

During my tenure in the Senate, I have spoken out about the Armenian Genocide because we must acknowledge the horrors perpetrated against the Armenian people and reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the world cannot and will not forget these crimes against humanity. We must speak out against such a tragedy and dedicate ourselves to ensuring that evils such as the Armenian Genocide are not revisited on our planet. This is the highest tribute we can pay to the victims of any genocide. It is important that we take time to remember and honor the victims, and pay respect to the survivors that are still with us.

In the Rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building there is an important exhibit displayed by the Genocide Project. The Genocide Project is an organization that seeks to preserve the memory of the Armenian Genocide by creating powerful displays that combine photos and the narrative from survivors of the Genocide. I would urge all my colleagues to view this powerful and moving account of the tragic events which we remember today.

The Armenian people have preserved their culture, faith and identity for over 1,000 years. In the last century alone, the Armenian people withstood the horrors of two World Wars and several decades of Soviet dominance in order to establish modern Armenia. I hope all my Senate colleagues will join me in honoring and remembering the victims of the Armenian Genocide.●

● Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise today to acknowledge and commemorate the 87th anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. I do so every year because the lessons of the past must not be forgotten and the crimes of the past must not be repeated.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman Empire launched a brutal and unconscionable policy of mass murder. Over an 8-year period, 1.5 million Armenians were killed, and another 500,000 were driven from their homes, their property and land confiscated.

As Americans, as sons and daughters of liberty, justice and freedom, we must raise our voices and acknowledge this terrible crime to ensure that it does not happen again.

Those who would single out men, women, and children to be killed solely on the basis of their race, ethnicity, and religion must know that the United States and the international community will not allow their crimes to go unpunished.

We have seen the crimes of the Armenian Genocide repeated far too often in this century: in Germany, in Cambodia, in Rwanda, and in Bosnia. We have stood by and remained silent. Let

us commemorate this occasion and state loud and clear: Never again.

Even as we remember the tragedy and honor the dead, we also honor the living. Half a million Armenian Americans reside in my home State of California and I am proud to be their representative in the U.S. Senate. They have overcome the horrors of the past to build a better future for themselves and their families in the United States. They are a testament to hard work, dedication, and perseverance and they have greatly enriched the culture and civic life of our State.

Let us remember the Armenian Genocide. Let us ensure that those who suffered did not die in vain. Let us rededicate ourselves to cause of human rights for all. Let us work together with Armenia and the Armenian American community to create a future filled with hope and possibility.●

● Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, today marks the 87th anniversary of when the Ottoman Empire began a policy to isolate, exile and even eliminate the Armenian population. Today, we pause to remember and honor the victims of the Armenian genocide. Between 1915 and 1923 one-and-a-half-million Armenians were systematically murdered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire and hundreds of thousands more were forced to leave their homes.

It has been nearly a century since this period of violence and annihilation began, and this anniversary serves as a reminder that this tragedy will not be forgotten. It must not be forgotten. Each year I commemorate this date on the Senate floor both to honor those who lost their lives and to remind the American people that the capacity for violence and hate is still prevalent in our world today. Recent history in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda tells us that systematic brutality and the attempts to extinguish a population because of their ethnicity are still all too real. And recent news reports detailing the re-emergence of anti-Semitism worldwide are an admonishment to us all that even lessons as searing and tragic as those taught by the Holocaust can be forgotten if we do not remain vigilant in our efforts to remember them.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, I had the unique opportunity to visit the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, ICTR, in Arusha, Tanzania, earlier this year. There I saw firsthand the tremendous progress being made and groundbreaking legal precedents being set with regards to genocide being seen by the international community as a crime against humanity. The court for Rwanda and the court for the former Yugoslavia send a clear message to the world that such horrific acts cannot and will not go unpunished. Since I became a member of the U.S. Senate, I have strived to make the protection of basic human rights and accountability for such atrocities worldwide a cornerstone in American foreign policy.

Today, we remember the Armenian men, women and children who lost

their lives during that tragic time period in world history, as well as the other countless number of past and present victims of violence.●

● Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to join my colleagues, my fellow Rhode Islanders and our Armenian American community in observing the 87th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Although some in the world still want to convince themselves, as well as others, that the deaths of so many Armenians was simply a product of a civil war, the facts are undeniable: from 1915 to 1923 1,500,000 Armenians died, and 500,000 refugees were forced to flee. These facts must continue to be affirmed. To ignore the Armenian Genocide would be to ignore history and therefore allow the preconditions to exist for another radical leader to rise and legitimize the future genocide of another of the world's people. Let anyone ask: "who remembers the Armenians?" and the answer would be: Millions in the United States and around the world. Today, Rhode Island is among 31 States which have, by either resolution or proclamation, recognized the Armenian Genocide.

At the time of the Armenian Genocide, Europe and the United States were too embroiled in the First World War to understand the magnitude and consequences of the atrocities being committed and therefore did little more than protest by correspondence. Understanding and remembrance today ensures that the world will respond appropriately to avert these tragedies tomorrow. As proof, we need only look to NATO's quick and decisive action to quell the Kosovo crisis.

We must also recognize that, in addition to the tragedies of the past, Armenians continue to suffer from the economic effects of natural disaster and the dispute over Nagorno Karabagh. Yet amidst this suffering the Armenian people continue to strive to build an independent democratic nation of peace in the Caucasus region. So, despite crisis elsewhere in the world, we must remain attentive to Armenia and the people of Nagorno Karabagh and recognize that significant economic assistance now will prove to be an investment with long term reward in a region of strategic significance to the United States.

Today while we solemnly commemorate the tragedy of the past, let us rededicate ourselves to building a strong and vibrant Armenia for the future.●

UNPUNISHED RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

● Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, as a member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I have followed closely human rights developments in the participating States, especially as they have an impact on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. In many former communist countries, local religious establishments have reacted with concern

and annoyance about perceived encroachment of religions considered "non-traditional." But in the Republic of Georgia organized mob violence against those of nontraditional faiths has escalated, largely directed against Jehovah's Witnesses. For over 2 years, a wave of mob attacks has been unleashed on members of this and other minority religious communities, and it is very disturbing that the police have consistently either refused to restrain the attackers or actually participated in the violence.

Since October 1999, nearly 80 attacks against Jehovah's Witnesses have taken place, most led by a defrocked Georgian Orthodox priest, Vasili Mkalavishvili. These violent acts have gone unpunished, despite the filing of over 600 criminal complaints. Reports cite people being dragged by their hair and then summarily punched, kicked and clubbed, as well as buses being stopped and attacked. The priest leading these barbaric actions has been quoted as saying Jehovah's Witnesses "should be shot, we must annihilate them." Considering the well-documented frenzy of these depredations, it is only a matter of time before the assaults end in someone's death.

Other minority religious communities have not escaped unscathed, but have also been targeted. Mkalavishvili coordinated an attack against a Pentecostal church last year during choir practice. His truncheon-wielding mob seriously injured 12 church members. Two days before Christmas 2001, over 100 of his militants raided an Evangelical church service, clubbing members and stealing property. In February of this year, Mkalavishvili brought three buses of people, approximately 150 followers, to burn Bibles and religious materials owned by the Baptist Union.

Mkalavishvili brazenly holds impromptu press conferences with media outlets, often as the violence transpires in the background. With his hooligans perpetrating violent acts under the guise of religious piety, camera crews set up and document everything for the local news. The absence of a conviction and subsequent imprisonment of Mkalavishvili is not for lack of evidence.

After considerable delay, the Georgian Government did commence on January 25 legal proceedings for two mob attacks. However, considering the minor charges being brought and the poor handling of the case, I fear Mkalavishvili and other extremists will only be encouraged to continue their attacks, confident of impunity from prosecution.

Since the initial hearing in January of this year, postponement of the case has occurred four times due to Mkalavishvili's mob, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, overrunning the Didube-Chugureti District Court. Mkalavishvili's marauding followers brought wooden and iron crosses, as well as banners with offensive slogans.

Mkalavishvili himself even threatened the lawyers and victims while they were in the courtroom. With police refusing to provide adequate security, lawyers filed a motion asking for court assistance, but the judge ruled the maximum security allowed would be 10 policemen, while no limit was placed on the number of Mkalavishvili's followers permitted in the courtroom. In contrast, the Ministry of Interior has reportedly provided more than 200 police and a SWAT team to protect officials of its office when Mkalavishvili was brought to trial under different charges.

Certainly, the Georgian Government could provide adequate security so that its judicial system is not overruled by vigilante justice. Unfortunately for all Georgians, the anemic government response is indicative of its inability or worse yet, its unwillingness to enforce the law to protect minority religious groups.

As is clearly evident, Georgian authorities are not taking effective steps to deter individuals and groups from employing violence against Jehovah's Witnesses and other minority faiths. With the ineptitude of the justice system now well known, Mkalavishvili has brazenly and publicly warned that the attacks will not cease.

Religious intolerance is one of the most pernicious human rights problems in Georgia today. Therefore, I call upon President Eduard Shevardnadze to take action to end the violence against religious believers, and prevent attacks on minority religious communities. Despite the meetings he held with the various faith communities intended to demonstrate tolerance, Georgian Government inaction is sending a very different message. Tbilisi's pledge to uphold the rights of all believers and prosecute those who persecute the faithful must be followed by action.

As a member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I urge President Shevardnadze to do whatever is necessary to stop these attacks, and to honor Georgia's OSCE commitments to promote and ensure religious freedom without distinction. The Georgian Government should take concrete steps to punish the perpetrators through vigorous prosecution.●

TRIBUTE TO JACK CHURCH

● Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, for 15 years, Jack Church has worked tirelessly on behalf of the citizens of Butte County as Emergency Management and Veterans' Service Officer. Over the years, Jack has completed and filed applications for disability, education, pension, and other benefits for the nearly 900 veterans living in Butte County. He has also provided assistance to the families of veterans and worked to obtain needed military and medical records, as well as medals and other decorations for veterans.

I have appreciated Jack's work on behalf of veterans over the years. He has

been a great advocate for veterans in South Dakota, not only on issues that impact the individual veteran and his or her family, but also on issues that impact all veterans, such as maintaining access to health care services in the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has always recognized the particular issues affecting veterans who live in rural areas, whose access to VA health care and other services can be limited by distance or income. He has been active on issues such as prescription drug costs for veterans and senior citizens, has advocated concurrent receipt of disability and retiree compensation for military retirees, and worked hard to speed up the processing of claims filed by veterans. He has truly been a friend to the veterans of South Dakota over the years.

In 2000, Butte County veterans received \$1.8 million in Federal benefits, compared to \$900,000 in 1990. This represents Jack's work to ensure the veterans in Butte County get the benefits they deserve. When claims or requests for records or medals were delayed, Jack was not afraid to "rattle the cages" to get the necessary action on behalf of the veteran. At last resort, he would contact my office for assistance in some of these cases. Thanks to his efforts, countless veterans in Butte County and the surrounding region have benefitted from services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. His comments and insight on veterans issues have helped me over the years in my fight to bring more attention and action on health care, education, and other issues affecting veterans. I commend Jack for his dedication and commitment to forging relationships that have the best interests of the individual veteran in mind.

In addition to his great work with South Dakota veterans, I have appreciated Jack's involvement in other areas in his community. As emergency management officer for Butte County, Jack has helped develop and administer disaster plans for the citizens of Butte County. In times of crisis, Jack was always in the middle of the action, helping to coordinate relief efforts and provide assistance to individuals in time of need. Whether it was finding shelter during an evening storm, or providing food stuffs or even portapotties, Jack has always been dedicated to getting assistance and emergency help to victims. But Jack has also been very proactive, helping to educate the public on the importance of awareness in times of emergencies. Together with other emergency management officials in South Dakota, I was pleased with Jack's efforts to help me promote the need for, and importance of, weather radios to the citizens of South Dakota.

Jack Church richly deserves the thanks of his community. It is an honor for me to share his accomplishments with my colleagues and to publicly commend him for serving South Dakota and our country.●