

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of the order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

KURDISH PRISONERS RELEASED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to spend a few minutes to talk about some developments recently in the country of Turkey, some of which we celebrate, some of which we have great concern about.

Let me first, by the way, extend my condolences to victims of yesterday's terrorist bombings in Turkey and to the families of the victims. Certainly we want the perpetrators brought to justice quickly.

But I rise to celebrate a small, but very important, victory for human rights that took place last week. Four human rights prisoners in Turkey were released. Leyla Zana, a prominent Kurdish advocate for human rights, and her colleagues, Hatip Dicle, Slim Sadak and Ornhan Dogan, were released from prison following a June 9 appeals court ruling in their favor.

These were Kurdish citizens of Turkey. These were citizens who were elected by majority vote to the Turkish Parliament. These were Kurds who had the nerve to speak their own native language, Kurdish, in the Turkish Parliament; and they were arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Amnesty International declared them prisoners of conscience. They have been there 10 years.

Leyla Zana was probably the best known of the four prisoners. She was the first Kurdish woman elected to Turkey's Parliament who openly and proudly identified herself as a Kurd. In fact, the European Parliament awarded her a Sakharov Prize in 1995 for defending human rights.

I had the great pleasure of getting to know her husband, Mayda, who traveled around the world to talk about the injustice of his wife being in prison. I spent time with her son Ronee who was for a short time a student in Los Angeles. This was a whole family dedicated to human rights for all, and especially to the Kurdish minority who has been denied them in Turkey.

The release of these prisoners of conscience was a result of international pressure, and I want to thank the 21 Members of Congress who joined with me in H. Res. 302 that called for the release of these four parliamentarians. The Kurdish community in the United States, as well as human rights advocates across the country, played an important role in gaining their release.

So we welcome the release of these prisoners of conscience, as well as

other reforms in Turkey, including the introduction of public broadcasting in minority languages. However, serious human rights and repression of the Kurds continue in Turkey.

From June 8-10, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Federation for Human Rights joined with Turkish human rights groups in a joint delegation to investigate the situation in Turkey. They heard continuing allegations of torture and violations of freedom of expression, assembly, association, religion, and the right to a fair trial. They expressed concern about prisons, national minorities, the lack of independent investigations into human rights violations, and internal displacement.

The State Department human rights report, released just in February, also found that serious human rights problems exist. The report says that security forces killed 43 people last year and participated in widespread torture, beatings, and other abuses. The Turkish Government continued to limit free speech in the press and, in particular, restricted expression by people sympathetic to Kurdish cultural or nationalist viewpoints.

So we are pleased at the release of Leyla Zana and her colleagues, but we are not placated by this good news. We demand greater progress. The European Union should insist that Turkey take greater strides to improve its human rights record and treatment of the Kurds before joining the European Union. Turkey needs to realize that its Kurdish citizens enrich the country rather than threaten it.

President Bush will visit Turkey for a NATO summit next week. He should use this opportunity to press for greater respect for human rights. I would hope that he meets with Leyla Zana and shows his respect for human rights for the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn and claim the gentleman from Nebraska's (Mr. OSBORNE) time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Indiana?

There was no objection.

TWO INDEPENDENCE DAYS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, as we depart for the Independence Day recess on Capitol Hill, families and communities across America will prepare for celebrations and remembrances of the 4th of July; and as I and my family and my heartland district in eastern Indiana prepare to do likewise, I could not help but feel that, in fact, in coming days we will celebrate not one, but two Independence Days: one for an 18th century colonial power born in violent conflict, aided by an ally in liberty to throw off the shackles of a despotic tyrant who beset its people for decades, and of that struggle, those people would write some 228 years ago that they held truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

They went on to cite a long string of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object of absolute despotism, and claimed with their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor that it was their right and their duty to throw off such government. One independence day.

The other will take place for the first time this coming Wednesday, not an 18th century colonial nation, but a 21st century modern power in the Middle East whose freedom is also being born at this very hour in violent conflict, aided by the armies of a liberty-loving ally to throw off the despotism and tyranny that has beset its people for decades and of their freedom the people of Iraq wrote these words in the preamble to their Constitution:

"The people of Iraq, striving to reclaim their freedom which was usurped by the previous tyrannical regime, rejecting violence and coercion in all its forms, and particularly when used as instruments of governance, have determined that they shall hereafter remain a free people governed under the rule of law."

Two Independence Days: One, 228th anniversary of ours on the 4th of July; and the other, the first-ever Independence Day for a free and democratic Iraq on a day that will live in history for the people of that great nation as a day of celebration, June 30, 2004.

□ 1530

Two independence days. We will celebrate in each of them the inexorable

rise of freedom in the world, and its advance is ever to be heralded. And may we ever add to the calendar of this planet, until each and every month is filled with the anniversary of such freedom days.

Until that great day comes, and the veil of tyranny is lifted from the four corners of planet earth, two independence days in the next 7 days. Let freedom ring in the United States of America and in a free and Democratic Iraq.

ACT NOW TO STOP HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE IN DARFUR, SUDAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, as bloated corpses floated down Rwanda's rivers, the international community debated whether the atrocities being committed in Rwanda fit the legal definition of "genocide." By the time the world stopped debating, it was too late. Over 800,000 men, women, and children had been killed. The failure of the world to act in Rwanda remains a stain on our collective conscience.

We must learn from the tragic mistakes of the past. Today, just 1,000 miles north of Rwanda in the Darfur region of Sudan, more than 30,000 people have already been killed by the Sudanese military's aerial bombardments and the atrocities being committed by their ruthless proxies, the Jangaweed militia. Gang rapes, the branding of raped women, amputations, and summary killings are widespread as we speak.

More than a million people have been driven from their homes as villages have been burned and crops destroyed. The Sudanese government has deliberately blocked the delivery of food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance. More than 160,000 Darfurians have become refugees in neighboring Chad. Conditions are ripe for the spread of fatal diseases such as measles, cholera, dysentery, meningitis and malaria. The United States Agency for International Development estimates that 350,000 people are likely to die in the coming months and that the death toll could reach more than a million unless the violence stops and the Sudanese government immediately grants international aid groups access to Darfur.

Here in Washington and at the United Nations headquarters in New York, many officials are again debating whether this unfolding tragedy constitutes genocide, ethnic cleansing, or something else. This time let us not debate until it is too late to stop this human catastrophe. Let us not wait until thousands more children are killed before we summon the will to stop this horror. America and the international community have a moral duty to act. The United States and 130

other signatories to the Genocide Convention also have a legal obligation to, and I quote, "undertake to prevent and punish" the crime of genocide.

The Convention defines genocide as actions undertaken "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as such." The actions include "deliberately inflicting on members of the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." By all accounts, including reports of U.N. fact finders and the USAID, it is the African peoples in the Darfur region who have been targeted for destruction by the Khartoum-backed Arab Jangaweed death squads.

In the middle of an unfolding crisis like that in Darfur today, there will always be debate over whether what is happening constitutes genocide. But it is important to remember that the Genocide Convention does not require absolute proof of genocidal intentions before the international community is empowered to intervene. The Convention would, after all, offer no protection to innocent victims if we had to wait until there were tens of thousands or more corpses before we act. A key part of the Genocide Convention is prevention, not just punishment after the fact.

The United States has already done more than any other nation to call attention to and respond to this tragedy. But our efforts to date have not brought an end to the growing crisis. We must take additional measures, and we must take them now.

The May 25 Security Council statements expressing grave concern about the situation in Darfur does not provide any authority for international action. The United States should immediately call for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council and introduce and call for a vote on a resolution that demands the government of Sudan take the following steps:

First, allow international relief groups and human rights monitors free and secure access to the Darfur region; second, the government of Sudan must immediately terminate its support for the Jangaweed and dispatch its forces to disarm them; third, the Sudanese government must allow the more than one million displaced persons to return to their homes.

This resolution must include stiff sanctions if the Sudanese government refuses to meet these conditions, and it must authorize the deployment of peacekeeping forces to Darfur to protect civilians and individuals from CARE and other humanitarian organizations seeking to provide assistance.

It is also critical that United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan exhibit strong leadership on Darfur. I was pleased to join with the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) in urging him to go to Sudan to address the crisis there, and I am pleased that Mr. Annan will finally be going next week.

However, this visit must be more than just an expression of concern. Secretary General Annan must make it clear that if the Sudanese government does not cooperate fully in stopping the killings and the destruction, he will push for immediate international sanctions.

And he must let the Sudanese government know that the welcome progress in reaching accommodation with the south in Sudan will not prevent the world from taking action to stop the horror in Darfur. The U.N. ignored warnings of mass murder a decade ago in Rwanda. It must not stand idly by again.

We should not allow other members of the U.N. Security Council to engage in endless negotiations and delay a vote on a strong resolution. Every day that goes by without action means more lives lost. Let's vote on a resolution. If the rest of the world refuses to authorize collective action, shame on them. Failure to pass such a resolution would not represent a failure of American leadership; it would be a terrible blot on the world's conscience.

Whether or not the United Nations acts, the United States should take steps on its own. We should make it clear that if the Sudanese government does not meet the demands in the proposed resolution, the United States will impose travel restrictions on Sudanese officials and move to freeze their assets. Even apart from U.N. action, we can immediately urge other nations to join us in taking these and other measures.

I commend Secretary of State Colin Powell for his decision to travel to Sudan next week and visit the Darfur region. It is critical that the Secretary's visit do more than simply call attention to the tragedy unfolding there. He must make it clear that the failure of Khartoum to fully cooperate in ending the destruction and killings will result in a concerted American effort to punish the Sudanese government and harness international support to intervene in Darfur.

Mr. Speaker, we must not look back on Darfur 10 years from now and decry the fact that the world failed to stop the crime of genocide. Rwanda and other genocides should have taught us that those who knowingly fail to confront such evil are themselves complicit through inaction. We are all God's children. These are crimes against humanity. Let us respond to this unfolding human disaster with the urgency it demands.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SAUDI ARABIA: THE NEED FOR AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.