

Guerrero, Mexico. Six thousand people live there. On the northern side in the United States is Falcon Heights, and Zapata County and Starr County are located there.

Yesterday in Guerrero, Mexico, eight buildings were burned to the ground by the drug cartels, the reason being the owner of those eight buildings was a Zeta, and he switched sides to the Gulf drug cartel and, in retaliation, the Zetas burned down eight of his buildings that he owns or controls. The problem in Guerrero, Mexico is so bad that law enforcement in that Mexican town have told people, Do not leave your homes today, because they expect violence to erupt today, tomorrow, or this weekend between the two cartels fighting over, as we say in the United States, turf, but what they say in Mexico is "la plaza," fighting over control of that area.

Good folks on both sides of the border live in fear because of the violence, because of the crime, because of the drug cartels. And while we talk about health care, we need to talk about the health of Americans who live on the U.S. side of the Mexican-American border and the health of people who live on the southern side as well.

The Texas sheriffs are very worried about what is taking place because the drug cartels have more money. They outgun Americans, they out finance us, and of course they have better equipment than the U.S. sheriffs do.

The Secretary of State today is down in Mexico City talking about how we can spend more money under the Merida Initiative, the billion dollars we gave Mexico to secure the border on that side. We ought to be talking about, as the sheriffs in Texas say, spending money on our side of the border to protect and reinforce the border on our side because, sooner or later, violence will erupt into the United States.

In Guerrero, Mexico, they are expecting a violent fight between these two drug cartels any moment, any day, fighting over this turf. You see, the Zetas are running out of money and they need more money, and so the way that the Zetas are going to finance their operation is to kidnap people; the plan apparently being, from what I understand, to kidnap teenagers who have wealthy parents and hold them for ransom until that money is paid. Hopefully, that does not occur, but we will see.

This is just one area along the vast border between Mexico and the United States where violence continues to erupt and where we need to be in control of our own borders. The Texas Governor has asked for troops on the border, and he has been denied that. It is the first duty of government to protect the dignity of the United States and secure the border and not just talk about the fact that the border needs to be secure.

People have a right, who live on the border, to live free from criminal car-

tels coming in and committing violence against Americans, and our government better uphold the first duty of government, to protect American citizens. This is today's news from the third front on the Texas-Mexico border.

And that's just the way it is.

FREEDOM FOR THE CUBAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, we have had a number of interesting debates in the last year, last few weeks in particular. One of the things that we should never forget is how precious freedom is and how frail freedom is. Just 90 miles away from our shores at this very moment, at this very instant, there are people who have been enslaved for over half a century under the boot of the same oppressive regime, the dictatorship of the Castro brothers. Half a century of brutality.

Just last week marked the seventh anniversary of the beginning of what was known as the Black Spring in Cuba. The Cuban Black Spring in 2003 was where 75 human rights activists, independent journalists, librarians, economists and other peaceful, pro-democracy activists and leaders were jailed for expressing their desire for democracy and democratic change in Cuba. All of them were sentenced to up to 25 years in prison in the worst possible conditions, in the worst possible prisons. Now, that is just some of the thousands of heroes who are standing up for freedom in the enslaved island of Cuba.

The majority of this Congress for many, many years has always stood with the Cuban people, has stood in solidarity with the Cuban people and their struggle for that freedom which is inevitable but has cost so dearly for so long. I have a lot to talk about on this issue, Madam Speaker, but before I proceed, I, frankly, am deeply honored to be able to yield time to an individual who has been a leader in this Congress for issues of freedom, a leader in this Congress who has always been speaking out for the oppressed wherever they may be, but who is so well known by the dissidents, by the opposition leaders, by the pro-democracy leaders in Cuba because his name rings as freedom for the Cuban people who have been enslaved. So I yield to the gentleman from Indiana, because it is a privilege to be able to share tonight with a person who everyone in Cuba—and there are those Cubans who live in freedom, whether it is in the United States or other parts of the world—recognizes this gentleman, DAN BURTON from Indiana, as a fighter for freedom.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Wow, I really appreciate you saying that, because

when I think of people who are really fighting for freedom in Congress regarding Cuba, I think immediately of LINCOLN and MARIO DIAZ-BALART. You two have been real stalwarts and are very eloquent. We are certainly going to miss LINCOLN when he retires after this year, but I know that he will continue to fight for freedom and democracy in Cuba. And ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN has been a real fighter, too. I appreciate all three of you and what you have been able to do. You worked so hard to help us get the Helms-Burton bill passed several years ago which dealt with the Cuban issue.

The thing that bothers me the most is, as you said, Castro has been in power down there for over 50 years. When he first came into power when the revolution took place, I remember there were a lot of people in America who thought he was going to be the savior of Cuba because Batista, who was the dictator down there, was supposed to be so bad; but they didn't realize while Batista might have been a problem, Castro was an absolute disaster. He came in and started killing a whole bunch of people and started imposing his communist philosophy and putting people in prison for huge periods of time.

There is a book that I read, "Against All Hope" by Armando Valladares. I know you both know him. When I read that book, I was on a plane. And he was in jail for, I think, 25 years only because he took issue with the communist approach to government in Cuba. I was on the plane, and when I got to a part of it I started to cry and the guy next to me thought something was wrong with me, and I assured him there wasn't and I told him about the book, and he said, I am going to have to read that myself. But I would say to anybody in their offices tonight that might be watching, I hope that you get a chance to read "Against All Hope" by Armando Valladares because it will tell you how bad it really is. I think last week or the week before, we had a person who had a hunger strike. I can't remember his name right now.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Yes, Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died in prison as a political prisoner on a hunger strike.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. He went on a hunger strike and he ended up dying because he was protesting the terrible treatment and the people who are incarcerated for nothing other than opposing communism, and he died in his fight for freedom. That is just unbelievable. Castro continues to keep people incarcerated for huge periods of time without any real charge against them except they don't agree with communism.

So, tonight, I am adding my support to LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART and MARIO DIAZ-BALART in their Special Order because Cuba should be free. It is only 90 miles from our border. Most of the people down there yearn to have their freedom and the democracy we have

here in the United States. Instead, they live in abject poverty and drive cars that are 50 years old because of the economy down there. If they work and the company they are working for is paid in dollars, that money has to go to the government and they are paid in pesos, which are worth almost nothing, and so people are kept in abject poverty with no hope except to continue to live that way.

So I hope and I pray that there will be freedom and democracy in Cuba. I hope it will be before too long. I hope that people like President Chavez in Venezuela will stop giving support to the Cuban communist government. And if there is anything that the United States can do to stop Mr. Chavez from buoying up that government, I certainly want to see us do that, because he is absolutely committed to not only keeping Cuba a communist country, but spreading communism throughout Central and South America.

But as long as the Diaz-Balart brothers are willing to fight and as long as ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN is willing to fight, I will be glad to carry their bags, because Cuba should and must be free. And one day Cuba will be free. And when it is free, we are all going to go down there and I am going to let the Diaz-Balart brothers buy me a margarita and we will all celebrate together.

Viva Cuba libre.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I thank the gentleman for his steadfast support for freedom.

I am going to approach the well because I want to show some pictures on some boards of some individuals that I want to briefly talk about.

Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Indiana just mentioned Orlando Zapata Tamayo. This is his picture here. He is a 42-year-old plumber and bricklayer in Cuba. He was arrested and thrown in prison, a peaceful pro-democracy advocate. While he was there, he was constantly being beaten and beaten and beaten, which is not unusual treatment for how that regime treats its political prisoners. It has hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of political prisoners.

So in order to protest the beatings against him and the inhumane treatment of all of the other political prisoners and to highlight the cause of freedom, the cause of freedom that so many are struggling for and are suffering so thoroughly for, he stopped eating and went on a hunger strike on December 3. Again, he continued to suffer from that brutality.

He had been arrested in 2003 during the Black Spring that I mentioned. Again, he was a person who had been declared a prisoner of conscience by international organizations like Amnesty International. So he went on this hunger strike, and after 80 days, 80 days, he passed away. He passed away because he refused to give up on the cause of freedom, and he refused to ac-

cept, as a normal everyday occurrence that should be accepted, the fact that the political prisoners should be beaten, mistreated, or incarcerated at all.

□ 1800

Let me also put up this poster now. This poster is of Orlando Zapata Tamayo's mother. What she is holding up here is the bloodied T-shirt of her son. That's the kind of beatings that he was receiving in prison as a political prisoner, as a prisoner of conscience, as a peaceful man who was just asking for freedom. And because of that, this is the kind of treatment that he was getting: constant beatings, constant, constant beatings in prison.

And after he died, after Orlando Zapata Tamayo, that hero for freedom that, hopefully, all of us will always remember, because history must remember him for his incredible sacrifice, after that, one would ask, well, is that it? Is the cause dead?

No, because there are other heroes that have come after him like the many heroes that came before. And they will continue to come until Cuba is free. And right after he died, another well-known political prisoner, very well-known activist, a very well-known pro-democracy activist also then stopped eating and went on a hunger strike. He's been on this hunger strike since the 24th of February.

I want everybody to see him. This is a man who's a psychologist; he's a freelance writer. He's on a hunger strike, and he knows what the consequences of that hunger strike may be because he saw what happened to Zapata Tamayo; and he's on a hunger strike, knowing that his fate may very well be the same, that he may give his life so that others will finally wake up and speak out about the horrible atrocities that have taken place just 90 miles away from our shore.

And, again, he says, he has stated that he will remain on this hunger strike until a number of other political prisoners who are—26 of them that are seriously ill, seriously ill—are set free. As you can see by this image, his condition is, well, very fragile. It doesn't take a medical doctor, because I'm not one, to understand that his condition is very, very fragile.

Felix Bonet Carcases, I don't have a picture of him here, unfortunately. But he's an engineer and a former university professor. He has already publicly vowed that he will also go on a hunger strike if Guillermo Farinas were to die on his hunger strike; that he will replace him in the hunger strike until, as he said, the final consequences, to highlight the condition of the political prisoners, to highlight the lack of freedom of the Cuban people, to highlight the fact that that freedom is something that's desired by all, and yet receives so little attention, so little international attention, because where are the international communities? Where are the international groups? Where are they speaking out for the

freedom of the Cuban political prisoners? Where are they asking and demanding elections for the Cuban people? Very few are anywhere to be heard, which is why, now, Felix has also said that he will go on a hunger strike as well, again, I repeat, as he said, until the final consequences.

And the story goes on and on and on. I want to now put up a picture of Jorge Luis Garcia Perez and his wife, Iris Perez Aguilera. He is known as Antunez, by one word; everybody knows him as one word. He was arrested while talking to some friends in a public square. In 1990 he was talking about the lack of freedom in 1990 and he was arrested, and he spent 17 years as a political prisoner, and he was consistently and constantly beaten in prison and yet he never gave up. He never lost faith. And he was finally released in 2007.

And what has he done since his release in 2007? Madam Speaker, he's continued to speak out. Madam Speaker, he's continued to speak out. He's continued to complain and denounce the treatment of the political prisoners and the lack of freedom and demanding democracy for Cuba. And just like he was beaten in prison, he and his wife, another hero, are now constantly arrested and rearrested; and they're beaten and beaten and beaten, time and time again. He's 45 years old, another hero that the American people need to know about.

These are heroes 90 miles away from the United States. Both of these individuals are heroes.

Another hero, Madam Speaker, Oscar Elias Biscet. He's a physician. He's a doctor. He was incarcerated. It started because he refused to perform forced abortions. They actually have forced abortions in the island of Cuba. He has dedicated his life to advancing human rights and democracy in Cuba. He's a medical doctor, as I said, and a total pacifist, a believer in Martin Luther King and in Gandhi, a person, who, again, continues to speak out, even from prison, even after the repeated beatings that he has received time and time and time again. He has been placed in solitary confinement. He has lost many of his teeth. And yet he continues to speak out.

And, unfortunately, where are the international organizations demanding his release?

And I can continue to go on and on and on, and we need to talk about some of these heroes that can never be forgotten, that we need to stand with them, next to them, behind them in solidarity.

But to also speak on this issue and tell us a little bit about it—and I know that he actually even, I believe he spoke, I think the gentleman spoke to Dr. Biscet.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. To Farinas.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. To Farinas. I'm sorry. To Farinas who is on a hunger strike recently. To

talk a little bit about that is a person who has dedicated his life to the cause of freedom, who has spent many years in public service, who will, even though he will be leaving Congress soon, will not stop fighting for the cause of freedom everywhere, not only in Cuba, but obviously, also in particular fighting for the political prisoners, for democracy, for the just causes, for the suffering of the Cuban people, and that is the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART).

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Thank you. I want to thank Congressman MARIO DIAZ-BALART for convening us here this evening. And, MARIO, if you may, leave Biscet because I'm going to read first a statement he sent out, along with five other heroes on March 3. And I'd like to start by, as I was saying, thanking you for convening us, and by pointing out who the heroes and genuine representatives of Cuba are.

There have not been free elections for many decades, and so the people cannot express themselves. When they are able to express themselves, these heroes and others like them, who, today enjoy the moral authority arising from their conduct, will have political authority. They will be elected at the municipal level, at the provincial level, at the national level as the leaders of Cuba. They are the representatives of the Cuban people.

Dr. Biscet, whose photograph is on top there, and five other heroes, managed to send a statement from their prison. They are in one of the gulags of the Castro brothers, and they sent out a statement on March 3; and I'd like to read it:

We continue to suffer cruel treatment, inhuman, degrading treatment and even torture in the Communist regime's prisons. We ask all who support Cuba's freedom to, between March 12 and March 31, unite in short periods of fasting and study of the Bible, demanding the liberation of all political prisoners and liberty and democracy in Cuba. Please engage in short fasts and prayer sessions in your homes, churches or other public gathering places. And speak out in articles, in conferences, to reflect upon and implement and help implement, through peaceful, just and patriotic means, the long-sought objectives of the Cuban people.

Oscar Elias Biscet, whose photograph is there, Julio Cesar Galvez, Ricardo Gonzales, Normando Hernandez, Tres Iglesias and Angel Moya. Those six heroes sent out the statement that I read.

A few days ago I was able to be in Lithuania, where I was invited to help form the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies. Over 100 nations belong to the Community of Democracies; and Lithuania, a small country with extraordinary moral authority, is chairing the Community of Democracies, and had the initiative and the idea of the formation of a parliamentary forum. And I was honored to be elected one of the seven vice presidents. The new president of that now-established parliamentary forum, Chairman Zingeris, of the Foreign Af-

fairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, made a motion in the first meeting of the parliamentary forum in Lithuania a few days ago, and drafted a resolution in furtherance of the request of Dr. Biscet and the other heroes. And I'd like to read it:

Resolution, in the convening meeting of the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies calling for support of Cuba's pro-democracy movement.

Whereas, the pro-democracy movement in Cuba has grown at a rapid pace over the last 3 years, and specific expressions of the movement are evident today in the explosion of bloggers on the island, independent journalists, musicians, artists, writers and others who are using their talents to denounce the atrocities of the dictatorship, all while putting forth new ideas for the transition to democracy;

Whereas there are still extraordinary obstacles to overcome such as the continued repression by the totalitarian dictatorship, extremely limited access to the Internet and texting capabilities and a lack of a coherent message of solidarity from the international community;

Whereas the dictatorship is fearful of the growth of the pro-democracy movement;

Whereas the message of the movement is coherent and clear in demanding freedom for all Cuban political prisoners, beginning with those who are gravely ill inside the prisons, freedom of expression and free, fair multi-party elections with international supervision;

Whereas this common position of the Cuban pro-democracy movement requires greater recognition, dissemination and solidarity on the part of the Community of Democracies;

Whereas now more than ever the Cuban pro-democracy movement requires that the democratic community take concrete steps to demonstrate its solidarity;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Community of Democracies Parliamentary Forum condemns the brutality of the Cuban regime against Cuban political prisoners, expresses its full support for the Cuban pro-democracy movement, honors Cuban pro-democracy fighters, such as the martyr, Orlando Zapata Tamayo, and expresses its admiration for the efforts of other heroes such as Guillermo Farinas, calls for the immediate release of all Cuban political prisoners and for free multi-party elections in Cuba, and calls on the democratic community to take concrete steps in demonstrating their solidarity with the Cuban pro-democracy movement by providing humanitarian and technological assistance to the pro-democracy movement, urging foreign diplomatic posts in Havana to strengthen contacts with pro-democracy activists on the island, and encouraging foreign dignitaries to visit Cuba for the sole purpose of meeting with pro-democratic activists, and

looking for opportunities to reiterate and support the common position of the Cuban pro-democracy movement in the international community.

That resolution passed at the convening meeting of the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies in Vilnius, Lithuania on 12 March 2010.

□ 1815

I see a distinguished colleague of ours. There is no one who I admire more than CHRISTOPHER SMITH, who has joined us.

And before yielding back to you Congressman, MARIO DIAZ-BALART, the floor, I would like to make reference to two items. First, I will put in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a list of 25 gravely ill political prisoners in Cuba who are the reason for the hunger strike of Guillermo Farinas, who is in the photograph below Dr. Biscet. Guillermo Farinas is on a hunger strike and has been on a hunger strike for weeks now, as we speak, for the reason that these 25 political prisoners are near death because of grave illnesses. And they are still being held and have received sentences at the order obviously of the tyrant Fidel Castro of up to 26 years of length per sentence simply for calling for freedom, supporting freedom, and democracy.

So after CHRIS SMITH speaks, I will, if it is all right, read the names of these 25 heroes. And then I would like to simply make reference, if I may, to—I received a call—I wasn't able to answer it before coming to the floor—from a reporter from the National Journal, Tom Risen, who, according to my staff, is asking my opinion with regard to the initiative now with the subterfuge, under the subterfuge, of an agricultural bill where they tell the American farmer, This is to help you make sales.

Legislation has been filed to open up what the Castro brothers consider their number one priority, to grant them their number one priority: The billions of dollars in mass U.S. tourism to their system, to their island, where they would then be able to receive the tourists, make sure that the tourists see the Potemkin village.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. If the gentleman will yield on that point.

I think it's interesting to note this legislation that you're mentioning, it was filed on the same day that Orlando Zapata Tamayo died in prison in a hunger strike, the same day where you would expect solidarity, where you would expect somebody to say, What can we do to help those that are struggling, suffering in prison. That same day, some in this Congress filed a bill to unilaterally lift sanctions, asking nothing in return for that day.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. And granting the Cuban tyranny its number one priority.

When some colleagues have come to me and said, What is your opinion on the agricultural bill that's been filed? I

said, Do you realize it has very little to do with agriculture? And it is the number one priority of the Cuban tyranny? To receive the countless billions in U.S. tourism unilaterally, thus in exchange for nothing.

The prisoners would continue being tortured, the Cuban people would continue being bound and gagged, being denied their ability to speak, much less have free and fair multiparty elections. For over 50 years that would continue. And the regime would have unilaterally its billions, countless billions of U.S. dollars. That is what that bill is about. It's not about agriculture.

The regime is allowed to purchase American agriculture by U.S. law, agricultural products. Castro has to pay so that the American taxpayer is not then given the bill afterward for billions, countless billions of dollars that he won't pay after he gets the ability to get financing. And if he gets mass U.S. tourism, then imagine the ability to further repress, to further torture, to further denigrate, to discriminate, because the essence of that regime is not only totalitarian regime; it is a racist regime against the Cuban people.

I wish to read the list of the heroes, but I think it's important that we recognize CHRIS SMITH.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I'm also going to ask you to relay a little bit of the conversation that you had with one of the heroes. We were speaking about how the majority of Congress has always had great solidarity with the people of Cuba.

One of the gentlemen that you most admire—and I knew of him before I got elected to Congress by having conversations with you, and then seeing his record. I also remember seeing a publication. I don't remember exactly what the quote was, but they called him one of the heroes of the oppressed. Not in Congress, just in our country.

And so it's a privilege to have the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH). Again, a hero of those who are oppressed, a hero if anyone is struggling in a political prison, in a gulag, for his or her belief. It's a privilege to have you here.

We're talking about heroes and the gulags. We have it easy here because we live in freedom. But we can't forget the struggles of those around the world, including just 90 miles away. I want to thank you for never forgetting, never forgetting those that are struggling like Dr. Biscet who is in there for, frankly, just because he is pro-life. So thank you for being here.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend for yielding.

And I just say to the DIAZ-BALART brothers, MARIO and LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART, you have spoken so bravely and for so long and with such clarity about human rights issues all over the world, including and especially in Cuba. The people of Cuba have no greater friends than you brothers, the DIAZ-BALART brothers. There isn't a single argument, fight, debate, amend-

ment, bill that you, the two of you, are not out in front taking all of the flak, all of the disinformation that is dished by those enablers of tyranny who believe that somehow if you coddle dictatorship, you will see an amelioration of their egregious acts. It doesn't happen. It didn't happen with the Nazis. It has not happened with the Chinese Communist regime. It has not happened in North Korea. And over this last half century, it has not happened in Cuba.

The more you enable a dictatorship, the more of an appetite it has for political prisoners, for repression, because there is no check, there is no tourniquet on their horrific abuse.

So let me say it again. No one has done more on behalf of human rights, especially for the beleaguered Cuban people, than LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART and MARIO. And I've been in Congress for 30 years, so I, along with FRANK WOLF and others, have worked very hard along with you on human rights laws and policies. It is a privilege to be called your friend for your steadfast advocacy. It is incredible.

When you spoke about the travel ban and other associated concessions to the dictatorship in Havana, it seems to me—and I say this to both sides of the aisle—but especially to my Democratic friends, especially to the Congressional Black Caucus that traveled down to Cuba, met with Raul and Fidel Castro, and as far as we can tell, never mentioned Dr. Biscet, never mentioned any of these courageous political prisoners who have been tortured, have been put in solitary confinement simply because of their steadfast belief in human rights and that every man, woman, and child in Cuba ought to live in liberty and freedom.

There is an empathy deficit, a lack of empathy, a lack of compassion. We talk a lot about compassion in Congress. Very often it's just a simple word, a throwaway word that has all kinds of meaning. We need to have empathy to get in their shoes, realize what it must be like to spend hours without a light in darkness, eating worm-infested food, being sick, having diarrhea that seems to never go away, losing your teeth, as Dr. Oscar Biscet is in the process of doing, if he hasn't lost them all already.

This brave man, an OB-GYN, a doctor who stood up for human rights, not one member of the Congressional Black Caucus, to the best of my knowledge, and other members who are always patronizing Fidel Castro, stood up and said, What about him? Why can't we go and see him and visit him in his prison cell? Congressman FRANK WOLF and I have tried for 20 years to visit Cuba to go to the prisons. Every time we're turned down by the Castro regime. We have a pending request right now. We were turned down last February.

Those who go in and sing the praises of these modern day Adolf Hitlers. And let's not forget you take Fidel Castro and Raul Castro and what they have done: Torture, humiliation, execution,

slow and long, sometimes a bullet, sometimes a very slow death. These people, if they were in a free society, not only would be prosecuted, they probably would be in an insane asylum for the kinds of terrible dark deeds that they commit on other people.

I read Armando Valladares' book years ago, and I recommend it to everyone who wants to enable this dictatorship. It's known as "Against All Hope." It's a chronicle of this brave man, years in the Castro gulags. He talks about one instance where in order to further humiliate the political prisoners, they lined them up and marched them into a vat of human excrement, submerged them; and these men, their noses, their eyes, their ears were filled with human excrement. Many of them lost their hearing. Many had eye problems, nose problems and all kinds of infections from it. They smelt horrible.

That very act caused a kind of PTSD in Armando Valladares. Later on when his wife, after he was exiled, upon his release gave birth to children, he couldn't even change his children's diapers because it brought him back in a flash to that terrible, degrading torture that was inflicted upon him by Fidel Castro.

Fidel Castro, ladies and gentlemen, ought to be at the Hague standing trial for crimes against humanity. He is in the same league as Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Slobodan Milosevic, and all of the passing parade of petty tyrants who maim, humiliate, and kill because they have a secret police that enables them to do it.

We call on this administration, the Obama administration, to cease, stop its coddling of Fidel Castro. It is unconscionable, all of the smiles and happy words. This man needs to be dealt with for the tyrant that he truly is. And I'm not talking about just Fidel but his brother as well. These political prisoners need friends in the White House so that some day they can live in freedom.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Before you leave, though, again, the atrocities are such. I would like, if it is possible, there is a poster there right next to you. It's the last one, I believe. And it shows the women in white. The ladies in white. They're the wives and mothers of, daughters of, spouses of political prisoners. And they demonstrate in Havana. And all they do is very quietly they just march. And it's a demonstration basically asking for a release of their loved ones.

This picture is from last week. That demonstration, that march—it's a march, it's a peaceful, quiet, march—was led by Reina Tamayo, whose son had just died in an 80-day hunger strike in a prison as a political prisoner.

And there you see what happens to those women, peaceful women who just walk quietly, peacefully.

A little while ago I showed the T-shirt held up by Reina Tamayo of her son who died in prison, a political prisoner who died in prison after a hunger

strike. Imagine the beatings. Imagine the beatings that that human being had to endure. Just look at that T-shirt. And look at that mother. Look at that mother and how anybody can then say, You know something? We're going to unilaterally give that regime what they want, asking nothing in return. Why is that happening?

□ 1830

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. If I may, CHRIS SMITH's point of the fact if there were justice, if there were justice in the world, the Cuban tyrant, Fidel Castro, and his brother, who now has the titles and carries out, continues to carry out the orders of Fidel Castro but has the titles now, some of the titles of power because Fidel Castro, the tyrant, is immobile and finds it difficult to receive people but still gives the orders and is the instigator and the source of terror in that island prison, if there were justice, the Cuban tyrant and his brother would be facing it in the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

What is most appalling is that instead of that, what we see is, number one, deafening silence. We hear deafening silence.

Where is the outrage? Imagine if these were hunger strikers protesting the lack of freedom in another dictatorship. Imagine. But the Cuban people now have had to, for 50 years, live as nonpersons. Where is the media? Where? These are men who are dying. Zapata Tamayo already died. Guillermo Farinas is in the process of dying. Felix Bonne Carcasses has said he will be next. Those are people who we know are on hunger strikes to protest specifically, to request the release of these 25 heroes.

I would like to, if I may, read their names, and then I will submit their names for the RECORD.

Our friend, DAN BURTON and now CHRIS SMITH talked about MARIO and LINCOLN, the brothers. It has been and it is a great honor for me to serve with my brother first in Tallahassee in the legislature in Florida and now in the Congress of the United States. It has been an honor and a privilege, for the rest of my days I will cherish, to represent the wonderful people of south Florida for 18 years in this Congress and 6 years before that in the State legislature.

But there are two brothers who are genuine heroes. Among these 25 gravely ill political prisoners, two are brothers. At one point, four were political prisoners, four brothers. There are still two, and they are gravely ill, both of them, Ariel Sigler Amaya and Guido Sigler Amaya.

The other names of 25 gravely ill political prisoners who we are aware of, and Guillermo Farinas is on a hunger strike demanding their release, their immediate release, the other names are: Antonio Villareal Acosta, Omar Moises Ruiz Hernandez, Arnaldo Ramos Lauzurique, Alfredo Manuel Pulido

Lopez, Arturo Perez de Alejo Rodriguez, Jesus Mustafa Felipe, Angel Moya Acosta, Luis Milan Fernandez, Librado Ricardo Linares Garcia, Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, Jorge Luis Gonzalez Tanquero, Lester Gonzalez Penton, Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso, Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, Julio Cesar Galvez Rodriguez, Miguel Galvan Gutierrez, Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia, also from another family and brothers who are heroes, two of them are political prisoners. Unfortunately, Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia, one of the two brothers, is gravely ill. Juan Adolfo Fernandez Sainz, Alfredo Felipe Fuentes, Eduardo Diaz Fleitas, Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, and Pedro Arguelles Moran.

Those 25 heroes we know of, and the hero Farinas, that psychologist and independent journalist who I had the privilege of speaking with the other day, the day I was leaving for Lithuania, I managed after many attempts to get through to him. Obviously, it's not easy, the dictatorship call. Now he is no condition to speak on the phone. He was very weak, even when I spoke to him. This was about a week ago. And I said, I am very worried about you. You are going to be very needed. And he said, No, don't worry about me. He said, There are many, many more qualified people who will be ready to help give a reconstruct. This has to be done.

He told me all peoples need martyrs, all nations need martyrs, and the time now has arrived for a different—a different attitude by the opposition in Cuba. I was extremely moved during my conversation with the hero, Farinas, and my thoughts and prayers are with him as they are with all of those who at this moment are suffering in the gulag of the tyranny.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Thank you for relaying that conversation.

The gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. You know, the long-suffering people of Cuba are really in a double unfortunate position. They are subjected to one of the cruelest dictatorships on the face of the Earth. Freedom House recently ranked Cuba as one of the least free countries in the world. The only country that ranked lower on the freedom scale than Cuba was the nightmare gulag of North Korea; yet, in an insane paradox, the Cuban tyrants remain romantic heroes. People have pictures of these tyrants on T-shirts, wear them on college campuses, and for many in the United States, including some Members of Congress, especially those who visited Cuba last year, they gush with admiration for these dictators who have so repressed people.

You know, last year, the U.N. Human Rights Council did what they call the universal periodic review, at which time they looked at the record of human rights abuse in Cuba. It was scathing. Many members of that council raised serious questions at the

council meeting and also said, Here are a number of recommendations. Virtually every recommendation was rejected out of hand, and that was the end of the story.

I would call upon the Obama administration to call, as a member of the Human Rights Council, for a specific meeting of the Human Rights Council, the U.N. Human Rights Council—it only takes a third of the membership to do so—to refocus on Cuba and its horrific human rights abuses and the fact that they have taken every recommendation—I mean, even the International Committee of the Red Cross has been denied since Armando Valladares' day, access to those prisons. The ICRC, a sterling record of investigations and interventions on behalf of political prisoners around the world, they can't even get into the Cuban prisons. So I would call on the Obama administration to ask for a specific meeting just on Cuba and the rejected recommendations.

Let me also point out that chronicling the abuse isn't all that hard. The State Department, in its human rights report released just 2 weeks ago, couldn't be more clear in laying out the catalog of abuses routinely visited upon the people, especially the almost 200 known, and there are others, political prisoners in Cuba's gulags.

Let me finally say, during the 1980s, many of us were very active fighting against the abuses of the Soviet Union. In the mid 1980s, Congressman FRANK WOLF and I actually got into Perm Camp 35, the infamous gulag where great heroes like Sharansky and many others and all these other great leaders spent time in solitary confinement and suffering at the hands of the KGB. We actually got in, visited with videotape and agitated for the release of almost two dozen political prisoners, and one by one they got out.

I visited Xanana Gusmao when he was a political prisoner in Indonesia, in a prison in Indonesia. He went on to become the President of East Timor.

FRANK WOLF and I got into Beijing Prison Number 1, where at least 40 Tiananmen Square activists, 40 Tiananmen Square activists with shaved heads were thrown into that gulag, known as the Laogai in China, and suffered horrifically, but at least the Chinese Government allowed us in.

A lot of people want to get out of Cuba. A lot of people—all people want to get out of their political prisons. Mr. WOLF and I are asking to let us in, and I renew that request of the Cuban Government as well as, again, to ask that this administration help to make that happen.

Finally, my friends will know, because I worked so closely with Mr. DIAZ-BALART—MARIO wasn't here yet—on the issue of linking a series of human rights with the lifting of a travel ban, most important of which was the full release of the political prisoners. That legislation passed here. It didn't pass in the Senate, unfortunately, and I will offer that again if

given the opportunity, although the rules will probably forbid it.

But that's what we need to do. You need linkage. You need to say to a dictatorship, If you want a benefit, you have to cease persecuting your own people. And, you know, there is a great group, we all know it, Brothers to the Rescue. The DIAZ-BALART brothers are the brothers to the rescue.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. You are very kind.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. You mentioned Brothers to the Rescue. I think it is important to note that this is a regime that obviously incarcerates, and oppresses its own people, but it also has a history of murdering Americans.

You mentioned Brothers to the Rescue. Two airplanes, American airplanes, civilian American airplanes in international airspace that were shot down by Cuban MiGs one fine day just because, because they could, because they wanted to, killing four individuals, four innocent individuals that, I guess, their sin was trying to save people in the ocean, looking for people that were in the ocean seeking freedom.

And the same regime that killed those individuals is the same regime that harbors multiple terrorists and criminals and fugitives of American law, including cop killers who are living in Cuba; the same regime that right now as we speak, as some will file bills to unilaterally give concessions and asking nothing in return, has another American hostage. That's the regime that we are dealing with.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I thank CHRISTOPHER SMITH for, first of all, his leadership, commitment, clarity. History will thank him, as it must. I reiterate my admiration.

I want to make a comment with regard to political prisoners. We know of these 25 gravely ill political prisoners.

The reason we know is because Guillermo Farinas, the hero on hunger strike, said that's why I am on hunger strike. Release them now before they die. We know of, yes, the names of 200 prisoners of conscience, but we also know that there are thousands of political prisoners for crimes that are only crimes in the fiefdom of a demented totalitarian tyrant, crimes like dangerousness. What is that? Crimes like trying to leave the country without permission.

But imagine being in prison and charged with dangerousness. Thousands, countless thousands of Cubans are in the gulag because of so-called crimes like that. They are political prisoners, and they have to be released unconditionally, immediately, as all political parties must be legalized—the press, labor unions—and free and fair multiparty elections must be scheduled.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. The State Department report, the human rights report, released 2 weeks ago again, they can catalog or chronicle 5,000 pris-

oners who are in there because of "dangerousness."

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. That are known, that are known.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Yes.

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Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. So it is thousands of political prisoners, because we know the names of 200 prisoners of conscience; let's not forget the countless thousands of political prisoners.

And you, CHRIS SMITH, and FRANK WOLF, who have not sought to go to Cuba to laugh at the jokes of the tyrants, but rather to meet with Biscet and meet with Farinas and meet with Antunez and meet with the other heroes and the leaders of the future, you were called specifically by name by the Cuban tyrant Fidel Castro "provocateurs who will never enter Cuba."

But what he must, he should, know is his days are limited. And the Cuban people, CHRISTOPHER SMITH, are going to thank you and they are going to thank FRANK WOLF, and they are going to thank all those men and women of the world who stood with them. Obviously, we wish there were many more CHRIS SMITHS and FRANK WOLFS, like there are more, now, people. Look at this example in Central Europe and Eastern Europe of solidarity. And more is coming, but much more is needed.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for spending this time and really explaining what is at stake here.

It is interesting how those who do get it—and again it is important to note that the majority of Congress has stood next and by the Cuban people and continues to stand by the Cuban people, but there are others as well that do. You mentioned the Lithuanians, the Poles, the Czechs, the Romanians. Those who have suffered from lack of freedom understand the frailty of freedom, also particularly understand the horrors of that Marxist regime 90 miles away from the United States, because they suffered under very similar types of totalitarian regimes.

But it is interesting to note, I mention this again, that this Congress in a bipartisan fashion stands by the Cuban people, stands by the political prisoners, stands by those relatives who have lost loved ones in the gulags and in the ocean, will continue to stand by the Cuban people, will not be swayed by propaganda.

This Congress does not forget the suffering of the Cuban people and does not forget that the most important thing that any human being has is freedom.

So I am so grateful to the solidarity of the American people, and I am so grateful because of that strong solidarity of the majority of this Congress. The Cuban people will be free. This Congress will do everything it can to make sure that they know that we are with them. They will be free. They are

giving it all. They are sacrificing even their lives. And it is important that tonight they know that they are not alone, they are not forgotten. We know they are there. We admire you, we respect you, and we stand 100 percent behind you.

I yield back the balance of my time.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Madam Speaker, if I might spend a few minutes talking about an extraordinary and historic day today, the day in which America finally, after more than a century, has managed to achieve a program that will in the years ahead create universal access to health care. A country that has universal insurance coverage is not so far away.

A few days ago, one of my colleagues used this quote by Martin Luther King to point out why this is such a historic and important day. Martin Luther King said, "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and the most inhumane." Those days are over. Unfortunately, Martin Luther King is not here today to see this historic passage.

Earlier, 6 hours ago, President Obama signed the health care legislation, and in the week or days ahead the Senate will follow up with corrections to that legislation, and we will be on our road to universal health coverage in America.

Along that road in the days ahead some very important things are going to happen. I received a phone call earlier today, and on radio yesterday was asked by a business person in the San Francisco Bay Area: How does this affect me? My wife and I have a small business. How does this affect me? And I answered this way: Are you purchasing health insurance now? And he said: Yes, and we can no longer afford it. We are going to have to drop it. We are one of those people that have been faced with the 40 percent increase from Blue Cross of California.

I said, well, two things: In the years ahead, companies such as Blue Cross of California will have their rates reviewed as to the appropriateness of the increase. But that is not today. But beginning today, actually January 1, 2010, 35 percent of what you spend on health insurance will become a tax credit and subtracted directly from your tax obligations.

I also received a call in the last couple of days from a rancher in my district. He asked: How does this affect me? I have three employees, part-time, but I try to buy health insurance for them. I asked him: Do you have health insurance for yourself and your wife? He said: Yes, also on the ranch policy.

I said: It will help the same way. You will receive immediately, and every