

The impact ruptured the bus's 60-gallon gasoline tank, starting a fire which reached 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit and filled the bus with smoke. With the front door blocked by collision damage, and no emergency exits in the windows or roof, most of the survivors exited through a single emergency exit at the rear of the bus. Of the 40 survivors, only 6 escaped uninjured. Many others suffered severe burns and other injuries. And 27 lives were lost in that crash.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Kentucky State Police, who not only provided rescue efforts at the scene and crash reconstruction analysis afterwards, but were also the lead investigative agency for this tragedy, following the case through to the prosecution phase. Current Kentucky State Police Commissioner Rodney Brewer was one of the investigators who worked on the challenging case.

Remembrances and observances in honor of the victims are happening in Kentucky today, where dozens of families remain grief stricken by the senseless loss of their beloved child. Those who survived the crash are still haunted by what happened. I wish to express my deepest sympathies for the victims' families, the survivors, first responders, and all those who were touched by this tragedy. The people of Kentucky stand with you today and share your sorrow.

If any good can be said to have come from this awful event, it is that it directed national attention on driving safety, the dangers of drunk driving, and safety requirements in buses. Kentucky took the lead in responding to this tragedy by requiring school buses to have more emergency exits than the Federal standard and instituting stricter drunken driving laws.

Madam President, I know my colleagues in the Senate join me today in paying tribute to the 27 people who were killed in this bus crash, to their families who grieve today, to the surviving passengers who must still live with the nightmare of what happened, to their families, to the law enforcement officers and first responders who assisted in rescuing the passengers, and to every Kentuckian whose life was altered by the events of that fateful day.

Even today, 27 people are killed every day in America as a result of drunken driving. In 2011, drunk driving killed 9,878 on America's roads and injured over 300,000. I believe one way we can honor the memories of the victims of this terrible accident is to continue to speak out against the dangers of drunk driving and work towards its elimination. No family should have to endure the suffering that so many Kentucky families did on this day 25 years ago.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the names of the 27 crash victims be included in the RECORD following my remarks. I yield the floor.

There being no objection, the names of the 27 victims of the tragedy of May

14, 1988, were entered into the RECORD as follows:

Jennifer Ann Arnett, Cynthia Anne Atherton, Sandy Brewer, Joshua Conyers, Mary Catheryn Daniels, Julie Ann Earnest, Kashawn Etheredge, Shannon Rae Fair, Dwailla Fischel, Richard Keith Gohn, Lori Kathleen Holzer, Charles "Chuck" Kytta, Anthony Marks.

April Mills, Phillip Lee Morgan, Tina Michelle Mustain, William J. Nichols, Jr., Patricia Susan Nunnallee, John R. Pearman, Emilie S. Thompson, Crystal Erin Uhey, Denise Ellen Voglund, Amy Christine Wheelock, Joy Williams, Kristen Williams, Robin Williams, Chad Anthony Witt.

PLIGHT OF THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY

• Mr. KIRK. Madam President I wish to call attention to the plight of the Bahá'í community and the atrocious human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Today marks the fifth year Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naemi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm have been behind bars in Iran due to their faith. These six individuals, along with Mahvash Sabet, imprisoned 2 months earlier, make up the "Yaran-I-Iran," or Friends of Iran, which is the former leadership group of the Bahá'í community of Iran. We must not let up on our efforts to defend the Bahá'í community until the Iranian Government's intensifying persecution comes to an end.

Iran outlawed Bahá'í institutions in 1983, leading to the establishment of an ad hoc leadership group to meet the basic spiritual and social needs of the Bahá'í community of Iran. In August 2010, the Government of Iran sentenced the Yaran to 20-year prison terms on the absurd charges of "spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime and spreading corruption on earth."

The Bahá'í faith is an independent world religion that began in 19th-century Persia. Its central tenets include unity, peace, and understanding. The Bahá'ís are currently the largest non-Muslim minority in Iran, numbering some 300,000 members, and the Bahá'í faith is one of the world's fastest growing religions with more than 5 million followers worldwide. Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Bahá'ís have been a target of systematic government-sponsored persecution. Roughly 200 Bahá'ís in Iran have been killed by government authorities since 1978 and more than 650 Bahá'ís have been arrested since 2005 alone.

In May 2011, the government conducted raids on the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, an informal learning system created by the Bahá'í community in response to the exclusion of Bahá'ís from universities. Several educators were arrested and detained. Seven of them—Mahmoud Badavam, Noushin Khadem, Vahid Mahmoudi, Kamran Mortezaie, Farhad Sedghi, Riaz Sobhani, and Ramin Zibaie—were sentenced to 4 and 5-year prison terms,

although Vahid Mahmoudi has since been released. Since October 2011, four more BIHE instructors were imprisoned.

The 2013 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Report stated that "during the past year, the already poor religious freedom conditions continued to deteriorate, especially for religious minorities, in particular for Bahá'ís." On February 28, 2013, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran reported that there were 110 Bahá'ís currently imprisoned in Iran solely for practicing their faith. Bahá'ís in Iran are restricted from filling public and private jobs, denied business licenses, and excluded from university. In recent years, the state-sponsored media in Iran embarked on a systematic campaign to demonize and incite hatred against Bahá'ís through the use of false and offensive propaganda pieces. An increasing amount of personal property has been confiscated, an increasing number of Bahá'í-owned businesses have been vandalized and attacked, and an increasing number of Bahá'í cemeteries have been desecrated over the past year across the country.

Despite being bound to numerous international treaties, the Iranian Government continues to persecute those who seek to exercise their freedom of expression, thought, conscience, and religion. As Americans, we honor our fundamental rights and freedoms by speaking out for the rights and freedoms of the Bahá'ís and all others who are oppressed in Iran. And it is incumbent on the Senate to reveal the truth about the situation of the Bahá'í community in Iran and take steps to eradicate the violence and injustice.

Illinois is home to the world-renowned Bahá'í Temple, so the plight of Bahá'ís in Iran holds special significance for our citizens. I am proud to have joined with my Illinois colleague, Senator DURBIN, in introducing S. Res. 75, a resolution that condemns the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Bahá'í minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights. Today, we reaffirm our solidarity with the faithful Bahá'ís in Iran who are subject to discrimination, detention, or worse solely for their beliefs and views. It is my hope that S. Res. 75 will bring the persecution of Bahá'ís and the issue of human rights in Iran to the forefront of the international agenda. •

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, it has been 5 years since the Iranian regime arrested and imprisoned seven members of the Bahá'í community's ad hoc leadership group. Today I rise to mark this sad anniversary and to remind folks of the persecution that religious minorities continue to face in Iran.

The Bahá'í faith was founded in Iran during the 19th century. It is an independent religion not a sect of Islam

and it rejects violence. The Bahá'í faith is practiced today by more than 5 million people around the world, roughly 300,000 of whom still live in Iran.

But rather than celebrate its own religious history, the Iranian regime considers the Bahá'í faith to be a heresy and brutally represses its practitioners. The regime routinely seizes personal property from members of the Bahá'í community, denies them access to education and employment opportunities, and detains them based solely on their religious beliefs. According to some reports, more than 600 Bahá'ís have been arrested since 2004. The American Bahá'í community counts 115 Bahá'ís currently in Iranian prisons and another 437 awaiting trial, appeal, sentencing, or for their sentence to begin.

Five years ago, the Iranian regime arrested seven leaders of the Bahá'í community—Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm—and detained them in Iran's notorious Evin prison. Iranian leaders accused the seven of espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, and propaganda against the Islamic Republic.

These seven have since faced sham trials in kangaroo courts. One of their lawyers, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, reported difficultly establishing basic, meaningful access to counsel. She also stated that the regime had no evidence against the accused and that their trial was riddled with irregularities. Despite these concerns the regime sentenced all seven to 20 years in prison in 2010.

I and many others found these sentences unconscionable and said so at the time. Imagine being sentenced to prison because your faith recognized the divine origin of the world's great religions, the oneness of the human race, and the equality of men and women. Imagine losing 20 years of your life because somebody objected to your personal beliefs.

For the Iranian regime, I am sorry to say, this is more business as usual. This religious persecution is hardly limited to the Bahá'ís either. In fact, since 1999 the State Department has designated Iran as a "country of particular concern" for its human rights record. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2012 annual report cited the regime for engaging in "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture, and executions based primarily or entirely upon the religion of the accused." The report goes on to state that "even the recognized non-Muslim religious minorities protected under Iran's constitution—Jews, Armenian and Assyrian Christians, and Zoroastrians—faced increasing discrimination, arrests, and imprisonment."

The Iranian regime must stop its assault on religious expression and free-

dom of conscience, and there is no better day to do so than this sad and dubious anniversary. I call upon Iran's rulers to immediately release the seven Bahá'í leaders and all other prisoners held on account of their beliefs. I also want to urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring S. Res. 75, introduced by Senators KIRK and DURBIN. This resolution condemns the Iranian regime for its state-sponsored persecution of its Bahá'í minority and for its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights, to which Iran is a party.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE MAINE TROOP GREETERS

• Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, on May 18, Americans will join together in observance of Armed Forces Day to thank the men and women of our military for their courageous and dedicated service to our Nation. This occasion has a special significance in my home State, as it marks the 10th anniversary of a remarkable group of patriots called the Maine Troop Greeters.

The story of the Maine Troop Greeters is that of hundreds of patriotic citizens who, since May of 2003, have gathered at Bangor International Airport to greet every single flight carrying our military personnel across the Atlantic to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, or other overseas assignments or bringing them home. Whether these flights land at Bangor in the light of day or the dark of night, in fair weather or foul, the Troop Greeters are there with cookies and coffee, cheers and songs, and handshakes and hugs.

It is the story of more than 1.3 million servicemembers and nearly 350 military dogs who have landed in Bangor on some 6,700 flights. Without exception, our troops have been astonished, overwhelmed, encouraged, and most of all, welcomed and thanked by this spontaneous outpouring of gratitude and respect.

Bangor's tradition of greeting troop flights began long before 2003. On a frigid March morning in 1991, a large group of grateful Mainers came to the airport to welcome home returning troops from Operation Desert Storm. One of those soldiers, MSG Kevin Tillman of Kentucky, borrowed a saxophone from a high school musician and performed a spine-tingling rendition of our national anthem. It was a moment that electrified America.

To underscore the powerful and lasting impact of the Maine Troop Greeters, Master Sergeant Tillman returned to Bangor in 2011, 20 years after that unforgettable moment, to perform in concert with our high school band.

I am often asked by my Senate colleagues why this Troop Greeter phenomenon is so powerful in Bangor. It is not just that the city I am proud to call home is the location of the east-

ernmost airport in the United States, a former Air Force base that can accommodate transatlantic flights. For many of our troops, Bangor is either the last American soil they touch upon deployment or the first they touch upon their return.

That simple answer only scratches the surface. The phenomenon of the Maine Troop Greeters is not merely a matter of geography and facilities but the manifestation of a caring community and of the American spirit. Throughout our Nation's history, young Americans have left the comfort and security of home to defend our freedom and to extend the blessing of freedom to others. And behind patriots in uniform have stood patriots at home to honor their service.

The Maine Troop Greeters are individuals acting out of personal conviction, but their efforts are magnified by the support of local businesses, civic organizations, and the Bangor International Airport. Their generosity strengthens the spirit of volunteerism that is a core American value.

One of the principles of true service is that it is not something that is done only when convenient but a commitment sincerely made and faithfully kept. That is the principle that guides our men and women in uniform and that guides those who honor and support them.

It has been said that it is easy to take for granted that which has never been taken away. Thanks to the veterans who served in the past, America has never lost its freedom. Thanks to those who serve today, we never will. Armed Forces Day reminds us of the high price some pay for what we all cherish, and the Maine Troop Greeters exemplify the gratitude all Americans share.●

RECOGNIZING THE MAINE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

• Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I am delighted to commend the Maine School of Science and Mathematics, MSSM, of Limestone, ME, on being recognized among the best high schools in our country. MSSM was recently awarded an outstanding 13th-place ranking among more than 21,000 public high schools included in the 2013 U.S. News and World Report national rankings on school achievement. I would like to engage my fellow Senator from Maine in saluting this accomplishment, which makes us both proud.

This award recognizes that MSSM students achieve at the highest level academically. MSSM is a top-performing school on State-required assessments, and staff at the school use assessments throughout the academic year as a tool for improving and customizing instruction. The school's faculty works closely with students to forge a strong school community where students are encouraged to pursue their interests.