

Abdullah al-Shami, the Al Jazeera Arabic correspondent, has been held since August of 2013 and has been on a hunger strike, protesting his detention since January. Their families in Australia, Canada, and Egypt are working tirelessly for their freedom.

I can empathize with the fear and concern their families face each day, worrying about the physical and mental health of their loved ones.

Locking up reporters has never stopped the world from finding out what is going on in a country, particularly in this modern world.

Egypt is a proud nation with a proud history and has been a longtime ally of the United States of America. The Egyptian people, regardless of which government, party, or individuals they support, have made it clear: their choice is one of democracy and freedom.

For those goals to be achieved, freedom of the press and freedom of speech must be respected and promoted. I encourage the Egyptian Government and the Egyptian judiciary to immediately release these four journalists, as well as all other journalists currently detained, and to allow all members of the news media to operate in an unrestricted environment that is free from harassment, censorship, and arbitrary arrest and detention.

As White House spokesman Jay Carney has said:

The restrictions on freedom of expression in Egypt are a concern, and that includes the targeting of Egyptian and foreign journalists and academics simply for expressing their views.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter signed by 15 Members of the Congress, urging the Secretary of State to take immediate action to help secure the release of these journalists in Egypt; and as Egypt struggles to find its identity, it is important for the international community to remind the Egyptian leadership—and all world leaders—of the need for a free press.

The imprisonment and prosecution of journalists sends a clear and ongoing message of harassment and intimidation to all journalists in Egypt. Free those journalists. A free society requires a free press.

OBAMACARE IS OFF THE MARK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HUIZENGA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, if you thought the Obama administration's rollout of www.healthcare.gov was bad, believe it or not, it got worse for another section of our citizens.

Back in Michigan, the Second District is home to a higher number of Latino citizens than any other congressional district in the State of Michigan; and like thousands of other residents across Michigan, Hispanic Michiganders are forced to deal with higher costs, the potential loss of their

doctor, and canceled insurance policies all because of ObamaCare. These citizens are in need of the same information that we are all in search of.

Well, after being delayed for more than 2 months, the administration finally unveiled its Spanish language Web site, cuidadodesalud.gov, that contained an embarrassing amount of Spanglish. Even I couldn't come up with that much Spanglish.

Frankly, it is insulting that the administration would simply make up words, rather than provide an accurate translation of the President's signature achievement.

One friend made the humorous observation that it is just as bad in Spanish as it is in English, and nobody can work with it in Spanish either.

Well, Latinos are more adversely impacted in many ways by soaring premiums because the median age of the Hispanic population is actually 10 years younger than the national average; therefore, they are seeing these premiums soar, as it shifts those costs to younger Americans.

It is predicted that younger citizens are the very folks who are needed to sign up for this program in order to make it actuarially sound, but these are the same folks who are not doing so right now.

The focus of the debate, instead, needs to be on patient-centered solutions that not only lower costs, but deliver high-quality care to more citizens, none of which, unfortunately, ObamaCare actually does. I believe it is time to repeal and replace this failed policy.

You know, Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have led with numerous options, such as the Patient OPTION Act, as Dr. BROWN was just talking about; Dr. PRICE of Georgia; Dr. BENISHEK of my home State of Michigan; the Republican Study Committee plan—a number of plans are out there that have been proposed that I think would be a far better solution to those things that we can all agree on: having greater access for more people at a lower cost.

But I think one thing we can all agree on in any language is that ObamaCare is off the mark.

THE HOMELESS MIDDLE CLASS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the hardworking Americans who are being left behind in this country. Some sectors of our economy are recovering from the great recession, but not all boats are rising, not even close.

I recently spent a night in a homeless shelter and was dismayed that it was filled with members of the middle class and that earning above the minimum wage did not protect them from having to share a dorm room with dozens of other people.

The reality is a subclass of workers has emerged who do play by the rules and work hard, but find that they are literally only one step away from living on the streets by a single medical emergency or a slow day, if you are working for tips at \$2.13 an hour. They work full time; but after putting in a full day, they go home to a homeless shelter.

We interact with these people every day. They take our food orders; they fix our cars and bag our groceries. They aren't looking for handouts or begrudging the success of others, but are simply trying to meet their basic needs. They face huge obstacles in finding a home in housing markets where rental costs have escalated beyond their reach.

Working 40 hours a week used to mean a minimum standard of living and a foothold on the first rung of the economic ladder to the middle class, but not anymore.

Let me tell you about some of their stories. One woman I spoke to was working at a Safeway in the bakery department. Her husband was working at OfficeMax in the warehouse. They were full-time wage earners, and they were living in a homeless shelter because they had to put together so much money for the first and last month's rent.

No one should be forced to live in shelters while they are working full time; but according to the National Center on Family Homelessness, 29 percent of the homeless in this country have jobs.

Let me tell you who else populates homeless shelters: veterans. That night, I listened to several veterans battling PTSD. One Iraq veteran who saw heavy combat said he once had a six-figure job in a Silicon Valley company before falling prey to drugs and alcohol.

We talked for a long time, as he slowly and haltingly unfolded his story about the worst side of battle that torments him to this day. He said: My country forced me to do terrible things.

Another veteran said she was raped while serving, but was eventually dishonorably discharged for admitting she was gay during the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy days. Her life has spiraled down since then.

A single mother with four children at another shelter I visited told me she was hastily evicted when the unit she rented was deemed illegal by housing authorities. Her \$19 an hour job made her too rich for child care assistance, forcing her into homelessness. By the way, the father is nowhere to be found to pay child support.

After listening to the hardships of working families, veterans, and single mothers, I left the next day, committed to doing more. We should all be doing more in Congress. We should all be spending a night in a homeless shelter in our districts to hear the stories of our constituents; or just spend a few

hours at one. It will inform you in ways that go way beyond the mere numbers.

We need to understand why 1.6 million children are homeless at least one night in the year and why the number of homeless children enrolled in public schools has risen 72 percent since 2006.

Our inaction is crippling working families, single mothers, and veterans who have sacrificed so much for this Nation. I call on my colleagues today to take the homeless shelter challenge.

Talk to your constituents who do not have a home, and meet the families who are failing because of our indifference and our inaction.

VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lend my voice to those who are being brutally silenced by the Nicolas Maduro regime in Venezuela.

After 15 years of suffering under Hugo Chavez's rule, the people of Venezuela have watched their liberties continue to be violently stripped away as Maduro further radicalizes the country's failed policies.

These policies produce the highest inflation rates in Latin America, leading to shortages of such basic goods as milk and toilet paper, and sending Venezuela into a desperate downward economic spiral that worsens every day.

The corruption that is enabled by the Maduro government and its supporters has also contributed to a society that is plagued by rampant violence. In this country of 30 million inhabitants, nearly 25,000 homicides were committed last year alone.

Worse still, the vast majority of these murders went unpunished, creating a climate of impunity that leaves ordinary citizens paralyzed by fear and hopeless about their own future and the future of their country.

As if this was not harsh enough, Mr. Speaker, Venezuelans are now facing the regime's repressive and violent actions. Weeks ago, Maduro and his cronies unleashed a bloody crackdown on students as they demonstrated against the regime's failed policies and peacefully demanded their basic human rights and democratic freedoms.

These students are expressing the sentiments of millions of Venezuelans who are sick and tired of the regime's destructive policies and fear for what may happen next. These students were exercising freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, yet Maduro responded to their brave calls of liberty with tear gas, rubber bullets, beatings, and live ammunition.

As the number of Venezuelan protesters swelled to the millions, Maduro has only stepped up the violence and his attempts to silence his critics by censoring radio and social media platforms.

By controlling the flow of information and the major media outlets, Maduro perpetuates his absurd conspiracy theories which cast blame on everyone, but himself, for this crisis of democracy in Venezuela.

Through the use of intimidation, unjust detentions, and violence, Maduro has followed the familiar playbook of other rulers who fear the desire of their citizens to live in freedom and under the rule of law.

This is especially the case with the brutal Castro tyranny, which has the biggest stake in keeping Maduro in power because of its mutual disdain for freedom, for democracy, for liberty, for the rule of law, and because of Castro's dependence on Venezuelan oil.

We have witnessed the Castro regime parachute in their own hired guns to help the Maduro regime continue its oppressive tactics against the people of Venezuela.

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Since the countrywide protests began on February 12, Maduro's regime has murdered at least 14 Venezuelans, injured or unjustly detained hundreds more, and committed the worst abuses against protesters as stories of torture and other human rights violations continue to pour in.

This relentless repression will continue and intensify unless the United States and the international community speak with a unified voice and help to promote the rule of law, the human rights, and the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people.

I hope that we will be able to say that we did not stand idly by as the Venezuelan people were brutally repressed and that we had a voice in making sure that people knew what was going on in Venezuela. I hope that we will be able to say that we stood for justice, that we stood for peace, that we stood for human rights, that we stood for freedom, and that we stood for the rule of law at the moment when these were needed the most.

THE NEW CHANCE FOR A NEW START IN LIFE ACT OF 2014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that we in this country have an obligation, commitment, and duty—and just simply out of friendship—to be concerned about the American people in the many ways that they come to this Congress or to their Members of Congress or to their elected officials. After contributing over the years to make America great, when they are in their time of need, it is most appropriate for us to respond.

It is now going on almost a year that we have not responded to hardworking Americans who, over the years, have contributed taxes. Maybe some of them are veterans who served in the United States military and are willing to

make the ultimate sacrifice, and now in their time of need we are fiddling and dillydallying. Unfortunately, we are doing so because our friends on the other side of the aisle cannot recognize that, but for the grace of God, there go I.

No, these individuals are not standing in line to get unemployment insurance. They are standing in line to apply for jobs. Because the people who are eligible for unemployment insurance are individuals who have worked most every day of their life, but, unfortunately, they have found in times of economic upswings and downswings, maybe because of their training or maybe because of being a recent veteran, that they are not able to get a job immediately.

This Congress has delayed over and over again where our friends on the other side of the aisle and those Republicans in the other body claim that they cannot offer one vote to be able to pass unemployment insurance.

These individuals need our commitment, America's commitment, as they have given a commitment to us. Right now in America, there are now 48 million Americans living in poverty, 22 million children. Some of the individuals here were not at minimum wage, but they are individuals that are working and making minimum wage and can't make it either.

We must confront these issues. There must be the attitude of the Good Samaritan in this Congress. I have introduced H.R. 3888, the New Chance for a New Start in Life Act of 2014. It provides grants to nonprofits and State and local governments to train individuals for the emerging industries, the new jobs, so that individuals such as those waiting in line for employment can find employment. I would like to add that legislation as we move forward on the extension of unemployment insurance—1.3 million, 1.5 million and growing, because every week some individual who is unemployed maxes out on the 26 weeks of what they get in unemployment insurance in the State. That is why this is called emergency unemployment insurance. That is why it is called insurance, because it covers individuals who have worked, who have contributed and who have worked.

So it is disappointing that we are here again not being able to extend the unemployment insurance again, not being able to put on the floor of the House and get a vote for increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10, a bill that has been filed for more than a year, and to be able to look working families directly in the eye and suggest that they can survive on less than the increase of the minimum wage.

There are businesses that will support this. There are businesses who recognize that, as they provide for their employee, that employee churns into the economy. That employee is a consumer. That employee tries to buy a house or pays their rent or goes out and buys items for their children or for their elderly parents or for themselves.