people, with one goal in mind, to muzzle any voice that speaks out in opposition to his regime.

People are suffering. Four out of five Syrians live in poverty. More than 200,000 people have been killed; 1 million have been wounded, and more than 3 million Syrians have fled the country.

Assad has shown that he will use any means necessary to maintain his dictatorship. He has rained down chemical weapons from the sky onto neighborhoods. He has dropped cluster bombs and barrel bombs into residential buildings occupied by women and children.

He has placed entire communities under siege, starving peaceful residents into submission. He has even bombed hospitals full of people recovering from his attacks.

I would now like to share a few stories that I have heard from my constituents, with whom I met just this previous Monday.

First, Dana Ashbani has family that lives in Syria. Several of her cousins were brutally killed by the Assad regime.

One summer night, in 2013, gunfire rang out in the streets of the neighborhood in which Dana's cousin lived. Fearing for her life, she grabbed her husband and her three young children and rushed toward a nearby basement for safety; but they were met by Assad's thugs and mercilessly gunned down, their bodies mutilated beyond recognition.

Dr. Rhagda Sahloul is an endocrinologist in Charleston. Her sister Dalia lives in Syria with her husband and their two children, Shahed and Omar, aged 7 and 11. Their town fell under siege by the Assad military in 2013.

The residents are running low on food and are surviving on a diet of dry noodles and, if they are lucky, vegetables that they grow on their rooftops and balconies. Without electricity, they have stripped their streets bare of trees to keep themselves warm on cold nights. No one even wants to think about next winter.

Recently, a foreign humanitarian organization dropped relief materials for the town, and Dalia's husband set up a marketplace in his home to facilitate the bartering of goods, but it didn't last long. The Assad regime bombed their home, destroying their little market and killing three people.

Dr. Khaled was an orthopedic surgeon in Aleppo before the conflict in Syria began, but he was forced to flee to Idlib, as he was targeted by the government. In Idlib, he worked in several field hospitals and witnessed numerous aerial attacks.

One of these attacks occurred on a new orthopedic center on the day of its opening in March 2013. The missile struck the hospital, killing one patient, injuring several people, and forcing the facility to shut down.

In June 2012, government forces entered Douma, a suburb of Damascus, and ordered everyone out of their apartments. Citizens were lined up and told to face the wall.

Mattessem, an 11-month-old baby at the time, was held by his mother, with his father and 10-year-old sister Fatima by her side. Fatima asked the soldiers to spare the life of her baby brother, offering $2, all the money she had in her pocket. The soldiers shot anyway.

As Fatima's father was shot, he fell onto Fatima, protecting her from the bullets. One bullet went through Mattessem and killed their mother. In a family of 25, only four survived.

These are just a few of the stories that I have heard, but they should be a call to action.

The Commander in Chief of our powerful military, President Obama, appropriately recognized the severity of the situation in Syria, drawing a red line at chemical weapons; but Assad has crossed that red line repeatedly, with impunity, and the President has failed to rise to the challenge. According to press reports, Assad's regime launched another chemical weapon on the Syrian people just this past week.

We need leadership from the President in the face of grave human rights violations in Syria, not faux red lines and empty threats. President Obama is not providing that leadership, and people in Syria are suffering because of it.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SUPREME COURT NEWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, this has been an interesting week, with all the activity here on the Hill. The Prime Minister of Japan came and spoke. He did a very admirable job. There has been a lot of activity across the street at the Supreme Court. It was rather interesting.

If you look at the history of the Supreme Court, until 1810 or thereabouts, the Supreme Court did not have a courtroom here in the Capital—or anywhere, really—and they often had to borrow a room from the House and Senate in order to have oral arguments.

They were thrilled on the Supreme Court in 1810 when the Senate Chamber on the second floor was open, what is now referred to as the Old Senate Chamber. The Senate moved up to that Chamber just straight down the hall out here, and the Old Senate Chamber downstairs was converted into a Supreme Court courtroom.

The Justices were thrilled. They were thrilled that they finally had their own nice courtroom. Now, it is not much more than a museum room. People can tour that room. There were some important decisions that were considered down there, some very poor decisions that were made in that room and some very good decisions that were made in that room.

One of them involved the Spanish ship the *Amistad*. It was a great movie. A guy who grew up in Longview, Texas, in my district, Matthew McConaughey, played the trial lawyer in the case.

□ 1115

Anthony Hopkins did a great job playing John Quincy Adams, and I commend that movie to anyone that cares to see it. I don't think as many people saw it as have seen McConaughey's other movies. He didn't take off his shirt in this one.

The basic story can be found in the likes of history books,—unfortunately, not many that you can find in any school in America these days. But it was a very important case in establishing propriety in America.

There was a group of Africans who were captured by other Africans, taken to the coast of Africa, sold into slavery, put in chains, sailed across the sea to the Atlantic, to the Caribbean. There, this particular group of Africans was put on a Spanish ship called the *Amistad*.

After they sailed, the Africans were able to get free, take over control of the ship. They didn't know anything about sailing a ship like that and ended up landing in the United States, on the United States coast.

Immediately, the Spaniards began proclaiming that the Africans were their property. They were slaves. They were their property, as was the ship, and they wanted to take their ship. What they said were slaves, or were actually Africans, should have been free, but they wanted to go and leave with them. So there was a lawsuit.

It took a while to find someone who could speak the Africans' native tongue. Their version was a little different. They were minding their own business. They were free Africans, and that is what they wanted to be. They are not anybody's property. But fellow Africans had sold them into slavery, and they just wanted to be free like they started.

So the lawsuit went on. There were a couple of trials, some apparent improprieties in the process, but it made its way to the Supreme Court in the 1830s.

By that time, John Quincy Adams had become the first son of a former President to be elected President. Someone told me it has happened since then, but he was the first son of a former President to be elected President. He had argued cases before the Supreme Court before, including just 2 or 3 years before he got elected President. In 1828, he was defeated, so he never got a second term.

Two years after that, he did, for a President, what was fairly unthinkable. He ran for the House of Representatives. No President has ever run for Congress before or since John Quincy Adams. But he had an abiding sense that he had a calling, like William Wilberforce in England, with whom he had

corresponded, that like Wilberforce was doing in England, trying to fight to bring an end to slavery there and all the injustice that came with it, he had a calling to do that in America.

So he ran for the House of Representatives. He was elected nine times, beginning in 1830. So the little plaque where his desk was, just down the hall in the old House Chamber, says, 1831–1848. He had a massive stroke in 1848. But, over the course of his time in the House, he repeatedly filed bills to end slavery in America, to free specific slaves, and, at times, he made the Rules Committee furious because of the number of bills he filed.

When he was recognized, in essence, he would give a hellfire brimstone sermon about the evils of slavery and how could we expect God to bless America when we were treating brothers and sisters the way slaves were treated.

Well, he never got a win on any of his votes to end slavery, but in the 1830s, after the *Amistad* case made its way to the Supreme Court, he was eventually convinced to take over the case, to argue it before the Supreme Court. He had originally been reluctant, but decided that was something he should do, and so he did. He argued the case.

Back in those days, there was no limit on length of oral argument, and so he went on and on, not as long as the 3 days Daniel Webster took in one case, but over 1 day and another, and of course they broke for lunch and in the evenings. But before the oral arguments ended, one of the Justices died, so that kind of throws a kink in oral argument.

But on the last day in his argument, after having argued the law, tried to argue precedents, tried to argue the facts, he apparently didn't feel good about the Supreme Court's position. He didn't feel like they were with him.

Mr. Speaker, if you can put yourself in the place of John Quincy Adams, knowing how wrong slavery was and how we could never reach our potential as a nation if we continued the course of slavery, and yet knowing if you are not up to the job in this case, arguing before these Justices, nine and then eight, and you don't do a good enough job, then the Africans will remain in chains, and most likely their children, grandchildren will wear chains because you didn't do a good enough job as the attorney, so the pressure was immense.

You can find his oral argument online. We don't have days for that to all be recited. But you can find, toward the end of the oral argument—and I don't have it here before me. I don't have it verbatim. But the process he used toward the end might be offensive to some judges now. If somebody had done it before me, as a judge, it might have been offensive to me.

But he was desperate to convince the Justices to think carefully about what they were about to decide: whether free Africans, Africans that started as free Africans, should remain free Africans or whether they should be considered no more than property to the people that bought them from the Africans that sold them.

So his argument turned, right at the end, to a recitation of Justices who had been on the Court and who were no longer alive, saying, in essence, you know: Where is Chief Justice John Marshall? Where is this Justice, that Justice? He called them by name. He knew them. Through his father, through himself, personally, he knew the Justices, all those that had passed away. Then he called every one of their names.

He said: The solicitor general that last argued a case against me before this Court—this was back in the early twenties—where is he? He had passed away.

And he went on naming the names of Justices who had been on the Supreme Court and died, and then came around and he said: Even the Justice that started this case, where is he? He is not with us. They have all gone to meet their Maker, their Judge.

Then he said: The biggest thing about—the biggest question about their lives is, when they met their Maker, their Judge, did they hear the words, ''Well done, good and faithful servant?''

That was an argument before the Supreme Court. Like I said, that is not verbatim, but the question that he said was so critical about their lives was verbatim because he knew that came from Scripture that he believed with his heart, like the Apostle Paul is saying that he hoped that he would hear that, ''Well done, good and faithful servant.''

Now, he didn't go the extra step and insult the Justices by saying: Are you going to hear it if you die tonight? But the implication was very clear. And fortunately, not just for the Africans, but for people of conscience back in that day, the Supreme Court made a good decision, unlike what they did in the Dred Scott case, making an abysmal decision. But that was also heard and decided while the Supreme Court met in that same room that tourists—it is not as easy to go on the tour as it used to be throughout the Capitol, but you can see that courtroom where that occurred.

The Supreme Court did the right thing. They decided the free Africans should be free Africans—a good decision—that they were not anyone's property, that they did not have to leave in shackles. They are free Africans. They were free people. This actually goes right back to the Declaration of Independence, and the Founders believed that we were endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights and that we were created equal.

One of the great questions about those days was how even Thomas Jefferson, who had put in the Declaration of Independence, one of the longest grievances was actually King George having allowed slavery to exist in America, he, himself, had slaves.

But you get the gist. They understood it really was not a good thing. It didn't end up in the final draft of the Declaration of Independence, but it held our country back, because any country that treats people like that is going to never reach their potential as a country.

It is interesting, though, in our history, that if you go there in what's called Statuary Hall because all these statues have been placed in there now, but it was the House Chamber until the late 1850s, the place where they had church for the majority of the 1800s. Thomas Jefferson went to church in there most Sundays.

The guy that coined the phrase in a letter to the Danbury Baptist, separation of church and state, there should be a wall of separation, he saw it as a one-way wall, that the government should not interfere with religion and religious beliefs, but he thought it would be perfectly fine for religion to participate in government, and had no problem. He even brought the Marine Band just down the hall to play hymns on many occasions on Sundays. For many years, it was the largest Christian church in Washington, D.C. Right down the hall, in the U.S. Capitol, in the House of Representatives, is where they met.

James Madison, who gets so much credit in accumulating the provisions of the Constitution, he should know what the Constitution meant in the First Amendment that was to come. He saw no problem with coming to church in the U.S. Capitol each Sunday while he was President.

Congressional Research Service, when I inquired, they indicated that usually when Jefferson came to church here in the Capitol each Sunday, he would normally ride his horse. Madison, when he came to church each Sunday here in the Capitol, he would normally come up here in a horse-drawn carriage.

But that is part of our history. There was no way that any of those Founders were ever going to try to interfere with the religious beliefs of, especially, Christians in America. That would have been unfathomable to them.

□ 1130

Yet that is the very thing that was being argued right across the street this week, that the government should be able to compel people with very strong religious beliefs, compel them to violate their most strongly held religious beliefs, and compel them basically to become slaves to the government and the nonbelief, the amoral beliefs of people who may be on the Supreme Court.

Now, I bring this up because, as you look at the history of the Supreme Court, you find that when the Senate moved at the beginning of their term in the year 1860, as they started that Senate year, they started it down the hall in the current Chamber where they are.

So in 1860, the Supreme Court moved up from the floor below to the beautiful old Senate Chamber, as it is called now, but it was actually the Supreme Court chamber from 1860 to 1935.

I think it was in 1931 the current Supreme Court building was built because before that, the Supreme Court got hand-me-downs for most everything. And, of course, after a decision like Dred Scott, they probably deserved nothing but hand-me-downs.

But nonetheless, our only President to have been President and also be on the Supreme Court, William Howard Taft, because of his political ties, he was in a position to seek and get funding for a new building. He didn't get to be Chief Justice in the new building.

But in a documentary that was done not too long ago—I was not aware—it pointed out that when the Justices of the Supreme Court were taken through this new Supreme Court building in 1935, showing them their new chambers, the new Court, many of them were appalled. They were shocked because it appeared to them to be a palace. They didn't even have a room for a while. Then they got the hand-me-down from the old, old Senate chamber. Then they got the old Senate. And now they are looking at a palace that they, as Justices, weren't supposed to have.

The documentary pointed out that there were some Justices who didn't move into offices for a long time because they just felt it was inappropriate for Justices in the United States of America to be in a palace.

Mr. Speaker, some may not be aware, but they are comfortable with the palace now, of course. But it was interesting that for a while, some of them felt that it looked too much like a palace, and it sent the wrong message.

When I was a judge, when I was a chief justice, we had many programs on ethics to teach, you know, what the general feeling on ethics was, what the rules are. And generally, if there was a case in which it appeared a justice had already made a decision in advance, that was a judge or a justice who should, in order to remain ethical, recuse themselves or recuse him or herself.

Well, we have two Justices, I read, that had performed marriage ceremonies for couples that were the same sex. There could be no more clearer evidence that a Justice had decided whether or not same-sex marriage was appropriate when such Justice was performing that.

But one of the flaws in our Supreme Court justice system that only exists for the Supreme Court of the United States—no other court in the land has this problem—they have no one to whom anybody in America using the court system can appeal on ethical issues. Congress can impeach after the fact, if something is done inappropriately. But, for example, if someone made a motion to recuse me as a judge, then I could hear it. But then that could be appealed to another judge, and there were methods of appeal.

But if you believe that a judge, or a Justice, in the Supreme Court's case, making their views very clear that they have very strong feelings for same-sex marriage and that they believe it is perfectly appropriate before the case comes before them, and yet they decide, I am not doing anything unethical, should stay on the Court—because they have come so far from those days when they didn't even have a courtroom for about 21 years to where they now have a lovely palace—there is no one else that they allow an appeal to. They could set up a panel to make decisions about ethical issues.

But when you, as a Court, began replacing God with your own decisions, when you began to replace the laws of human nature with what you think the laws should be, then naturally, you are not going to set up a panel that second-guesses your decision on ethics because you are the be-all and end-all for such decisions.

So it grieves me very much for our Court system to have Justices who have made their positions very clear, sit on a case as if they hadn't, decide a case as if they are fair and unbiased, and then say, this is justice in America.

We have badly regressed. The days of humility for some Justices are gone. There was a time when Justices had such a sense of humility that they thought this was a palace they should not be in. Those days are gone. There was a time when Justices could be embarrassed about such a horrendous decision, like Dred Scott. I fear those days are gone as well.

But they will make a decision, and they will decide either—I hope they decide that this is a decision for each State, that since the Constitution does not speak to the issue of marriage and the 10th Amendment makes very clear any power not specifically enumerated is reserved to the States and the people, that they will ensure that they are not the arbiters of morality in America any longer, at least not on this issue; that they will decide that they are not going to go so far as to condemn people who believe firmly in the teachings of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, people who believe in the Commandments, that the man depicted as the only full face in this whole gallery above these doors, the man who was considered the greatest lawgiver of all time when this was decorated in this way, Moses—that is the same Moses that, if you go into the Supreme Court and you are looking at the Supreme Court, and you are seeing them struggling to become God in their decisions about religion, if you look up at the marble wall above you, to the right, you will see Moses depicted, holding the Ten Commandments and looking down.

They will decide whether they are going to inject themselves and tell people what the Pilgrims heard in Europe, what Christians heard around the world who came to America so they would not be persecuted as Christians. They will tell America very clearly: We don't care what your religious views are. This Supreme Court is going to decide that we are going to prohibit the free exercise of religion because we are more important, and our views are more important than the clear language of the First Amendment when it says that the government will not prohibit the free exercise of religion.

Well, we will find out. I hope and pray that the Supreme Court has a time of humility, their hearts are touched to the point that they will not decide that the Pope is an idiot, that they, as the popes of America, know what is best for the people, more than any religious leader in the country, that they will substitute their judgment for those of the Bible.

It is kind of hard to get around Romans I, if you really believe the New Testament.

Nonetheless, that decision is coming. Mr. Speaker, I am truly hopeful that Americans will realize the seriousness of this decision and the ultimate breakdown that it will be. And I hope we don't degenerate in this country into more violence.

But we see what happens around this country when we get God—we don't even want God mentioned anywhere, even though, for this country's history, the Bible has been the most quoted book right here in this Chamber, the Chamber down the hall, the most quoted book ever in our government's history.

So when I am talking like this on the floor, we usually get calls from people that are going berserk, how dare him mention God.

Just in the last week or two, I have quoted from Abraham Lincoln, who wrote an official United States Government proclamation, begging, imploring the people to have a time of prayer, humility, and fasting. And in the proclamation, he makes clear that the problem at that point, as slavery was a huge problem, the Civil War was ongoing at the time of this proclamation. But he knew those were symptoms of what happens when you turn from the religious morality of the Bible. And he said, We have forgotten God.

I hope the Supreme Court will not, once again, inject themselves as gods but that they will observe the true meaning of the First Amendment.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1145

THE COURAGEOUS LADY FROM BALTIMORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) for 30 minutes.