

are some secret side deals with Iran concerning inspections of their nukes. The administration conveniently withheld this from Congress.

Susan Rice said:

These documents are not public, but nonetheless, we have been briefed on those documents. We know their contents. We are satisfied with them, and we will share the contents of those briefings in full in a classified session with the Congress, so there is nothing in that regard that we know that they won't know.

Let me get this straight. We are supposed to trust the person who lied to the American people on national television about Benghazi?

Mr. Speaker, what else are they hiding? Maybe the details of the side deal are stored on a server somewhere. We know we can't trust the Iranians to follow the deal.

Now, we can't trust the administration to let us know what is in the deal. Let's hope these secret side deals are not as hard to get a hold of as the former Secretary of State's emails.

And that is just the way it is.

#### INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

(Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Indian Independence Day and the 11th Annual New Jersey India Day Parade, organized by the Indian Business Association.

On August 15, 1947, India won its freedom from the British Empire, raising the Indian national flag at the Red Fort in Delhi.

On August 9 of this year, New Jersey's vibrant Indian American community will celebrate that milestone with one of the largest events in the world, drawing more than 35,000 attendees.

Oak Tree Road, between Edison and Iselin, will be filled with dozens of floats, marching bands, musicians, and dignitaries, concluding with a cultural program that will offer everyone present the opportunity to see the beautiful traditions of India in addition to modern culture.

New Jersey is home to one of the largest Asian Indian populations in the United States, behind California and New York in number, but second to none as a percent of our overall population. They are a thriving group that contributes to our State's economic growth and strength in diversity.

I wish everyone well as they prepare for the August festivities and send early Indian Independence Day greetings to all those celebrating in my district.

#### HONORING FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENT CRISTINA GOMEZ

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about Cristina Gomez and thank her for her kind, generous, and caring spirit.

It has been a little over a year since this promising young woman from South Florida suffered a serious traumatic brain injury after she fell while jogging. Before her tragic accident, Cristina was a senior at my alma mater, Florida International University. She was studying to be a teacher and donated much of her free time to help others.

Cristina's family has established the Cristina Gomez Traumatic Brain Injury Foundation to help other families in similar circumstances and to carry on Cristina's legacy as she recovers.

Christina, the thoughts and prayers of our community are with you and your family. Get well soon. Florida International University misses you and wants you back.

□ 1645

#### JORDAN MICHAEL FILLER FOUNDATION

(Mr. DOLD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the efforts of the Jordan Michael Filler Foundation in their fight against an unseen killer: addiction.

One person dies every 3 days in the Chicago suburbs because of a heroin overdose. Jordan Filler was 23 when his addiction to heroin tragically took his life. His family started the Jordan Michael Filler Foundation in his honor to help others combat addiction. The foundation works tirelessly to provide vital education to children and their families on addiction.

Mr. Speaker, heroin is an epidemic in our community, and unfortunately, there is no silver bullet to end drug abuse. As the co-chair of the Illinois Suburban Anti-Heroin Task Force, I am committed to working with local organizations like the Jordan Michael Filler Foundation to prevent drug overdose. There are no easy solutions to the drug abuse epidemic, but I am committed to putting in the hard work required to make progress alongside our many community partners.

I offer my sincerest thanks to the Jordan Michael Filler Foundation and other community organizations for their lifesaving work.

#### HONORING MIKE ZAHN

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mike Zahn, a friend, public servant, and leader in the Springfield, Illinois, community.

For several years, Mike has been involved in the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 965 in Springfield. His father was an operating engineer and served as the branch's business manager.

Following in his father's footsteps, Mike first joined in 1974 and spent nearly 30 years with Local 965, eventually becoming the business manager for the branch himself.

In addition to his time with Local 965, Mike also immersed himself in public service. He served as the chairman of the Illinois State Council and was a member of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Diversity Development Council. Mike has been a strong voice for improving our infrastructure, as a frequent visitor to this great city.

After over four decades with Local 965, Mike announced he is going to retire as an operating engineer. He and his wife, Jacki, have two children, Steve and Jessica.

I am proud to honor my friend Mike Zahn for his work on behalf of the people of Springfield, Illinois, and this great country. I wish him the best in his retirement.

#### RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by looking at headlines. All you have got to do is just read the headlines that are blaring at us, coming at us in print, over our Internet, and others. They say things like: "Five children among 94 crucified, flogged, and caged by ISIS for eating during Ramadan"; "Hundreds Killed in Nigeria Anti-Christian Violence"; "ISIS Plants Land Mines in Christian Civilian Homes, Ancient Ruins Across Iraq, Syria."

If we have the stomach for it that particular day, we may read the article that follows. We might say a prayer or silently wonder at the brazen face of evil. But ultimately, we go on with our lives. We do not fear for our personal safety or that of our families because of systemic religious violence.

Yet millions of our brothers and sisters around the world do not have the luxury of walking away from real religious persecution. They don't read the news stories; they live them day in and day out. They have watched family

members die. They have had friends simply vanish into thin air, never to be heard from again. Their homes and businesses are seized by the government. Even as they place their hope in eternity, they fear for their future here on Earth.

Today, my colleagues and I come to the House floor to tell our stories. We come because this body and this administration have a responsibility to use our position to promote religious liberty around the world. Millions of lives are literally depending on America's willingness to export our most precious commodity, religious freedom, and it is time to step up our efforts.

As a pastor and currently a chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve, defending religious liberty at home and abroad is near and dear to my heart. I have had the honor of serving folks of many faiths, as well as those with no faith, and I am convinced that the foundational importance of religious liberty is not just in America, but in every country.

No nation is truly free unless its citizens can practice their religious beliefs without fear of losing their life or livelihood because of state-sponsored opposition or unchecked persecution by their neighbors. Yet even in democratized societies, we are witnessing a sharp increase in violent religious persecution worldwide.

If America is to be a shining city upon a hill in the 21st century, we must redouble our commitment to fighting for those around the world who do not enjoy the basic right to worship as they choose.

I am grateful that my colleagues who share my passion for religious liberties have joined me for this Special Order, and I am especially grateful to my friend from California, Representative VARGAS. We have gotten to know each other and travel, but on this issue, party lines are diminished, party lines are laid aside. When we think about our own freedoms and religious liberty, he is a champion for that.

I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. VARGAS) as we continue to discuss this issue.

Mr. VARGAS. I thank the gentleman from Georgia, Representative DOUG COLLINS, for his opening remarks and especially for his courage to speak out for religious freedom around the world and also for his courage serving our Nation in uniform.

At this moment, religious freedom around the world is in a state of emergency. The recently released International Religious Freedom annual report describes "humanitarian crisis fueled by waves of terror, intimidation, violence," and "the horrific loss of human life, freedom, and dignity that has accompanied the chaos."

From the brutality of ISIL in Iraq and Syria to Boko Haram's mass murders at mosques and churches and the displacement of over 140,000 Rohingya Muslims and 100,000 Kachin Christians in Burma, the past year has seen un-

speakable violations of the basic right to practice one's religion. Additionally, blasphemy laws, the vast displacement of religious minorities, and the persistent attacks on religious communities and places of worship should all be a cause for concern.

Today, I would like to highlight the plight of religious minorities in ISIL-held territories a year after the fall of Mosul.

The Nineveh plains have been inhabited by Christians for the past 2,000 years and was first settled in 6000 BCE. In the Bible, the Prophet Jonah was ordered by God to "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

Based in modern-day Mosul, with the Tigris River to the east, the Nineveh plains is rich in cultural history and religious diversity. Before the fall of Saddam Hussein, the number of Christians in Iraq had been estimated to be between 800,000 and 1.4 million. This included Armenian Catholics, Chaldean Christians, Assyrian Church of the East members, and Protestants. In 2013, the Christian population was estimated at 500,000 and shrinking significantly.

Last year, the world watched in horror as a transnational Sunni insurgency initiated a political and religious insurrection in the name of establishing a caliphate across Iraq and Syria.

After ISIL established its control over northwestern Iraq, these Islamist insurgents warned religious minorities living under its jurisdiction to either convert to Islam, pay a cumbersome religious tax, or be executed. These religious minorities included Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen, and Shabak, all of which have a long and rich history in the region and have historically coexisted peacefully with Muslims.

Since ISIL's declaration, thousands of families have packed their belongings and fled to neighboring communities in Kurdistan, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Many thousands have been murdered or abducted, and an unknown number of women and girls have been sexually assaulted and forced into marriage.

We all witnessed in August 2014 thousands of Yazidis fleeing to Mount Sinjar to escape the brutality and persecution as ISIL advanced in the surrounding areas. I would like to read the testimony of a Yazidi recounting that horrible time:

Hours later, ISIS forces attacked the Yazidis in Sinjar. The Yazidis in towns and villages of the south side of Mount Sinjar had some light weapons, such as AK-47 rifles, with a small amount of ammunition. They fought against ISIS forces for 4 or 5 hours. While this minimal defense was proceeding, many Yazidis fled to Mount Sinjar.

Finally, the defenders ran out of bullets and our positions were overrun. The lucky few Yazidis who made it to Mount Sinjar stayed for several days without any food or water. Hundreds then died from starvation and dehydration, especially infants, young children, sick people, and elders.

On August 6, while ISIS forces flushed other Yazidi and Chaldo-Assyrians from their Nineveh plain homes, ISIS also advanced toward Mount Sinjar. Then the Yazidis had no choice but to flee by foot, a journey that took days.

On Friday, August 15, more than 210 Yazidi families in Kocho village, which is just south of Sinjar City, received an ISIS order to convert to Islam or be killed. In that village, the ISIS militia beheaded more than 70 young men, killed hundreds, and took all women, girls, and children to Badush Prison near Mosul. The women and children were sold as sex slaves by ISIS commanders.

While American leadership assisted in providing humanitarian relief as events unraveled, little was done to alleviate ISIL's reign of terror. Since then, over 2 million people have been displaced, and thousands continue to face crimes against humanity. These include torture, enslavement, rape, forced prostitution, imprisonment, and extermination.

Additionally, as a means to eradicate the history and heritage of these different groups, ISIS has led a campaign to destroy cultural and religious properties. Assyrians and other Christians have seen the destruction of the statue of the Virgin Mary at the Immaculate Church and the tomb of the Prophet Jonah, and numerous churches have been destroyed, looted, and burned down.

In closing, I would like to echo the words of Pope Francis, who eloquently stated: "Our brothers are being persecuted, chased away, they are forced to leave their homes without being able to take anything with them. I assure these families that I am close to them and in constant prayer. . . I know how much you are suffering. I know you are being stripped of everything."

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. I think what you have stated shows what we are dealing with here. What we are finding is the intolerance, something that is just so atypical of what we find here in America.

I think the reason we are here today and actually talking about this is to again raise that level and to understand that this is not something in the past, not something beyond. It is something that is going on right now.

It is not easy to hear about, but you had spoken of it as well, the ISIL victims who reject forced conversion. As we think about that in our religious freedom context, just because they say, "I am not going to convert to your faith," Mr. Speaker, is what they are saying, they are crucified, beheaded, tortured, raped, and countless other atrocities, sold into slavery, simply because they stand on their own faith and won't be forced into the faith of another.

ISIL, frankly, is just evil. They hide behind the cloak of religiousness. The problem is evil is just evil. You call evil what it is. Religious freedom has to be protected, and we have to be purveyors of that.

When we look around, just in the Iraq community alone, just a few years

ago, there were 1.5 million Christians in Iraq. Now, the best estimates are 200,000, at best estimate. And it just continues to drive. This is something that we are going to have to continue, I believe, to watch.

There is a dear friend of mine here tonight who is a fighter for not only religious liberties, but I have fought with him for the lives and the birthdays of newborns everywhere. He is a fighter for religious liberties. The gentleman from Arizona speaks with authority on these issues because he has been there and he has been fighting on the front lines for a while.

It is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) to continue this discussion on the need for religious liberties.

□ 1700

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. It is a privilege for me to be here on the floor of the House of Representatives tonight with Congressman COLLINS and Congressman VARGAS.

I consider them both precious friends and collaborators in this vital struggle for religious freedom, which is the cornerstone of all other freedoms; and without which, there can be really no other kind of freedom to exist for any length of time.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that I fear more for my colleagues and my fellow Americans than the danger of growing numb to the evil that incites these horrific atrocities being committed against people around the world today based on their faith.

I submit that we are, in these days, witnesses to some of the most glaring and brutal attacks on this universal right of religious freedom in all of our history.

The Islamic State, that metastasizing cancer spreading throughout the Middle East and north Africa, is especially targeting Christians, Yazidis, and other ancient religious minorities and communities for extinction.

The world has watched this insidious campaign of terror unfold day by day for over a year. More than 407 days now have passed since the ancient city of Mosul fell into the hands of the Islamic State.

Their campaign of terror drove hundreds of thousands of Christian men, women, and children out of the land of their spiritual heritage, which dates back for nearly 2,000 years.

Nearly 1 year has passed since the Islamic State's attack on the Yazidi community. Thousands were slaughtered, Mr. Speaker. At least 5,000 women and young girls were taken captive as sex slaves. Nearly 1,000 boys between the ages of 4 and 10 were captured and forced into ISIS training camps.

Mr. Speaker, there is no room for Christians, Yazidis, or other dissidents in the Islamic State's self-proclaimed caliphate. Innocent men, women, and children are forced to choose between

their deeply held religious beliefs and their lives.

They are subject to torture, mass executions, beheadings, and crucifixions. They are drowned and burned alive in cages. They are raped, abused, and sold as commodities in a modern day slave market.

They are tied to chairs and thrown off high-rise buildings. They are desecrated, violated, humiliated, and stripped of their dignity. Their ancient places of worship and sacred sites are destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, how many more unimaginable atrocities must occur before this administration takes off its heartless blinders and finds the courage and determination to decisively address this evil slaughter of innocents based on their religious beliefs?

German Lutheran pastor and anti-Nazi dissident Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: "Silence in the face of evil is evil itself. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak, and not to act is to act."

Mr. Speaker, the Obama administration can no longer remain conspicuously silent on the plight of religious minorities caught in the wake of the Islamic State. It is vital that America and the world make the necessary responses to stop this campaign of terror and preserve these ancient religious communities from extinction.

In the middle of this scourge, the administration has allowed the Special Envoy to promote religious freedom of religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia position to remain vacant now for nearly a year. Very little effort has been made to equip regional security forces to protect these communities from ISIS' advance.

This administration's response is shameful and an astonishing failure, and it only affirms the Islamic State's barbaric strategy and encourages what they proudly boast to be a "battle between faith and blasphemy, truth, and falsehood."

Mr. Speaker, I would just adjure the President of the United States not to continue to stand by and let this evil relentlessly proceed.

The assault on religious freedom we are witness to in the Middle East is just one of the many attacks against this most sacred and basic right of religious freedom. There are thousands of innocent people around the world who are antagonized, oppressed, tortured, and killed because of their belief or disbelief in a particular religion or ideology.

I know these are challenging subjects, Mr. Speaker, but God help us to remain committed to echoing the voices of these innocents in the halls of Congress.

May we all be relentlessly committed to pursue that day when the light of hope will fall across all of the lonely faces of God's children all over this world and that this "most inalienable and sacred right of true religious free-

dom will be the possession of every last human being, and the destiny of future generations will be to walk in the sunlight of liberty for as long as mankind inhabits the Earth."

May it be so.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. I thank you again, Congressman FRANKS, for your friendship. Thank you for your outspokenness on this issue for many years, and I think we continue to bring this forward as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I want to overlook before I turn it over to another colleague is the area of Pakistan—and this is something that is many times overlooked when we start, but in Pakistan, blasphemy laws carry a potential death sentence.

Now, think about this for just a second—and, again, in our area, we get numb to the fact because of what we have—but blasphemy laws there carry a potential death sentence for anyone who insults Islam or professes another faith.

In November 2014, two Pakistani parents were burned alive because of their Christian faith. These individuals were accused of burning a Koran and subsequently killed by a mob of their countrymen.

A Pakistani court also convicted a Christian woman, mother of five, Asia Bibi, of blasphemy and sentenced her to death. Yesterday, after much prayer and concern from the Christian community, Reuters News reported that the Pakistani Supreme Court temporarily suspended her death sentence.

While the suspension is welcome news, the international community desires that Ms. Bibi is released from prison because of the trumped-up charges.

These are just two examples of persecution in a nation in which all minorities must grapple with the devastating impact of the notorious blasphemy law, as well as the danger posed by Islamic militant organizations that enjoy a strong foothold in the region.

We must, as Congress and the administration, implore, put pressure—whatever we need to do—to say to Pakistan: This is something that has got to be removed. This is something that needs to be done away with. These blasphemy laws must be put away, to be a part of a free and orderly society that actually recognizes the beliefs and religious liberties.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER), my friend and fellow pastor to speak on this issue and bring his perspective on what he has seen across the world, but also in his time in Congress.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Congressman COLLINS. I appreciate you raising this issue and bringing it to the House floor. It is one of a growing concern internationally, that we have seen organizations like Boko Haram and others who have done great damage to those, really, to the least of these.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation was founded on the right to believe and to live according to one's beliefs, and our commitment to allow people to live out their religious values without fear of discrimination is really the cornerstone that developed our country into a force for freedom; but this liberty isn't just an American right. It should be a foundational element for all people groups.

Who would have ever thought that we would be in a position to reference the United Nations? This right is so universal that it was included as article 18 of the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 18 recognizes that the right of all people to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion—this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, freedom to manifest his belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

However, members of the very institution that is supposed to subscribe to this declaration proactively seek out and punish individuals in groups for their very own religious beliefs.

In violation of international law—and his inherent human rights—Iran is currently imprisoning a gentleman by the name of Saeed Abedini for the mere fact of being a Christian, a man who was working with children who had little hope, if any.

I have communicated on multiple occasions with his wife, Naghmeh, whose children have pleaded and begged this administration and Iran to be able to release.

In fact, in 2012, the history, during a visit to Tehran to meet with his family to talk about helping out with orphanages and building board members, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard arrested Saeed for his Christian faith.

Without any due process, Saeed was summarily given a sentence of 8 years. Throughout Saeed's imprisonment, he has spent weeks in solitary confinement. The prison guards have allowed other prisoners to come and beat him. He is denied medical treatment for infections that resulted from beatings because he is labeled an infidel.

I am more than proud that this House unanimously passed H. Res. 233, that demands the immediate release of Pastor Saeed, along with former U.S. marine, Amir Hekmati, and Washington Post journalist, Jason Rezaian; but we need to do more. We need to return Pastor Saeed to his home family now.

As I was thinking about this whole process and speaking about it, I actually thought back to the original Mayflower Compact, so I looked it up. The words—it is amazing—still ring true, Mr. Speaker.

Allow me remind us just for a moment of those words. It reads:

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith,

etc., Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.

IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, 1620.

Ronald Reagan—in closing—said it best. He said:

The most essential element of our defense of freedom is our insistence on speaking out for the cause of religious liberty.

That is why we are here today, and I hope and am proud to stand with Representative COLLINS in continuing to stand for those who cannot stand for themselves.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate those words, and I think it is not just in faraway places. We are also dealing with this kind of issue in this hemisphere as well.

Just a little closer to home, southern Mexico even has experienced growing religious tensions over the past year. In a country in which 90 percent of Mexico's population identifies as Catholic, the Mexican Constitution even has long protected freedom of worship.

There is growing hostilities against Protestantism. In fact, the highlands of southern Mexico have a history of sectarian violence. Just a few decades ago, conflict led to hundreds of deaths and the displacement of 30,000 Protestants.

Right now, the conflict has arisen once again. Protestants have had their lands seized, utilities cuts, and appeals for government assistance has fallen on deaf ears. There are also reports of violence, death threats, and forcible expulsions of hundreds of victims from communities in recent years.

You don't have to go all over the world to see that we have this rise of religious intolerance around. That is a basic right, as Congressman WALKER stated. Even in the U.N., it is one of those rights that is laid out in article 18, that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

A right includes freedom to change his religion or belief in freedom, either alone or in a community with others or in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my dear friend from California, Representative VARGAS, for more, as we have been hearing from our friends.

It is all over, and we need to continue to shine this light.

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to thank Mr. FRANKS from Arizona and Mr. WALKER from North Carolina and especially you, Representative COLLINS, for your remarks and your leadership on this issue. Thank you.

I would also like to conclude my remarks today by highlighting a few other key issues. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, there are more than 50 million refugees around the world, half of which are women and children.

Religion is a key factor in humanitarian crises worldwide, as we saw earlier this year, with a record number of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean to seek asylum.

□ 1715

In this Congress, I have also introduced legislation—the Protecting Religious Minorities Persecution by ISIS Act of 2015—to address the plight of religious minorities in ISIS-held territories.

Additionally, there are far too many people imprisoned for religious belief and religious freedom advocacy. We heard already about Mr. Saeed Abedini.

I would also like to take a moment to focus on the issue of prisoners of conscience around the world by highlighting the plight of Behnam Irani of Iran, as detailed in the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's Defending Freedom Project Prisoner's List: Behnam Irani is an evangelical Christian leader from Iran who led a 300-member church of Iran in Karaj, a city less than 15 minutes outside the capital of Tehran. In 2011, Irani was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment for his Christian activities after a raid on a house church in Karaj. In September 2014, Mr. Irani was hit with 18 additional charges, including Mofsed-e-filarz, which means "spreading corruption on Earth," a crime punishable by death. However, in October 2014, this charge was dropped and Irani was sentenced instead to 6 years' imprisonment due to his alleged acting against national security and forming a group to overthrow the government. In total, Pastor Irani is expected to serve a total of 12 years in prison and is, therefore, due for release in 2023. Mr. Irani has faced numerous health problems while in prison, including severe bleeding due to stomach ulcers and colon complications. Mr. Irani is married and has a daughter and a son.

Lastly, I would like to bring a spotlight to the increase in anti-Semitism in Europe. According to numerous reports, there has been an increase of anti-Semitic acts in France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria, Italy, and Germany between 2013 and 2014.

These include violent acts and attacks with an anti-Jewish motivation. Earlier this year, the world saw four Jewish patrons being murdered during an attack on a kosher supermarket in Paris, France.

We must continue to partner with and support Jewish communities around the world to mitigate these anti-Semitic attacks.

With that, I again would like to thank my Republican colleagues and all of my colleagues for their support on this issue. Again, I would like to thank, in particular, my colleague and friend from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Thank you for being here, Congressman VARGAS.

I think there are many things that we can stand for. Nothing, I think, more basic to our liberties not only here in our country, but around the world, is just standing for, as Congressman WALKER just said, those who can't stand for themselves, who are right now being persecuted simply for the act of a conscious belief, the act of having a faith that others disagree with.

I think that is why we are here tonight, Mr. Speaker, to talk about this in terms of things that we can do and things that we can highlight.

One of the issues that is concerning to me—and it is going to be debated in this Chamber later—is, when we are dealing with countries who have—and we have talked about this today with Iran—dealing with countries who encourage religious persecution. They have issues with this. And we yet enter into agreements without discussing those.

My concern is, in matters of trade and business, all international leaders come to our President, our Ambassadors, our State Department, our government officials. Whenever they come and trade in business—and they want to do business because this is the market that everybody wants—then this is our time to bring this up.

It is in those times that we bring up the persecution. It is in those times that we bring up the five that are held in Iran. It is in those times that we stand for them while they are shackled and cannot stand for themselves.

We have to get over this ridiculous notion that we shouldn't bring up religious liberty in certain contexts because we don't want to offend anyone.

We are worried about causing offense while men, women, girls, and boys are being raped, killed, crucified, and losing their lives. No American faces a barbaric State-sponsored death sentence simply because he or she believes a different religion than a neighbor.

Mr. Speaker, this is part of the freedom that we have. It is a part of the freedom that has been given to us by those who have passed before us.

I have always believed that we stand on the freedoms in this country today of the Constitution and the charters that have gone before us and not only what they did to sign their names to the Declaration of Independence, to sign their names to the Constitution, but to say that we will fight for those rights and those men and women who have died over the years, to say these are worth fighting for.

There have even been issues in our own country of intolerance. And what

we have to understand, from my perspective even as an Air Force chaplain, is there have been more discussions on what is right and how we are going to stand up for what we believe.

As an Air Force chaplain, I am there not only from my faith background that I have, but for all, whether they have a hard-and-fast faith, a faith that is just being developed or they have no faith at all.

That is what a chaplain is there for, is to present encouragement and to preserve the religious freedoms and protections that we have.

If we back up on that, if we back up on the basic freedoms such as religious liberty, freedom of conscience, these things that we take for granted, this human rights issue in our country, then what else are we going to back up on? If we start messing with the fundamental pillars, where will it end?

The light that shines brightest here is the one that shines brightest across the seas. We cannot let this issue continue to just become dull to us by simply reading headlines on a page, maybe saying a prayer for those in need, or believing that a book of martyrs is something that used to happen and not anymore.

Today there are those around the world who are simply dying or being persecuted because of their own conscience, because of their belief that they hold. That is wrong.

It is time for us to use all of our resources here in the freest country in the world, to say: We are not going to stand for it. We need to make this the light.

I thank Congressman VARGAS again and those who have come in to be a part of this, to make sure that this light is not dim. It is something that will continue to shine brightly.

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

#### FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DODD-FRANK WALL STREET REFORM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. HIMES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today on this fifth anniversary of Dodd-Frank to reflect a little bit on a signal piece of legislation that, to this day, remains controversial.

Dodd-Frank, of course, was a response to the worst economic meltdown that we have seen in this country since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

I want to reflect back on what led to the need for Dodd-Frank, the impact that that Great Recession, as we have come to call it, had on Americans and American families all over this country and then think a little bit about what Dodd-Frank has and has not done in the 5 years since its passage.

It remains a controversial piece of legislation. All you have to do is look at the steady stream of press releases from the majority party on financial services.

I have a few here:

Dodd-Frank has enshrined too big to fail into law.

Obama claimed Dodd-Frank would lift the economy. It has done the opposite, despite the fact that we learned today, of course, we have got one of the lowest jobless rates in a very, very long time.

Financial crisis was caused by Washington's dumb regulations. That would come as a surprise to pretty much anybody with economic know-how who saw the long chain of malfeasance and irresponsibility in the mortgage market that actually led to the crisis.

Dodd-Frank is setting the stage for the next crisis.

“Dodd-Frank Act leaves America less stable, less prosperous, less free.”

These are truly extravagant claims.

So let's back up a little bit and remember January of 2009. That happens to be the month that I was given the privilege of serving in this Chamber.

It came after the last quarter of 2008 in which the United States' economy actually shrank at an 8 percent rate on an annualized basis.

The economy was very literally melting down. The stock market was half of what it is today. Businesses were closing.

Americans saw literally trillions of dollars of value—let's talk for a second about what “value” means.

“Value” means that retirement fund that you were relying on in order to retire. It means the money that you had set aside in a brokerage account to educate your children.

It means those savings that you had accumulated over many, many years of foregoing that vacation or scrimping on the budget, those things. All of that, for many Americans, was wiped out or cut in half, devastation.

And, by the way, in January of 2009—I remember this—though the bailout had passed this House what was known as the TARP, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, and though that had been put into place by the United States Congress and seemed to have stabilized the market, at least temporarily, we worried day in and day out as to whether this—let's face it—obnoxious measure—I don't think there is anybody who thinks in a free market system there should be bailouts—this obnoxious, politically toxic measure which, nonetheless, reasserted some stability in the financial services sector—nobody really knew if it was enough.

I remember wondering whether we might not see a bankruptcy in a money center bank, a moment, perhaps, in which ATMs wouldn't have money in them. This was January of 2009.

Most importantly—there are a lot of big words—asset values, this, that, and the other thing, money center banks—this meant devastation for millions of