

have heard other things, but this is something that we need to be aware of, the persecution of people because of religious faith.

One of my daughters recently went to Russia, and she experienced and saw this very thing that I am talking about. No home church worship services, only structured buildings where you have the Russian police watching what takes place. So they are moving in a direction like they were under the Soviet days of persecuting people who have religious faith.

Putin is taking Khrushchev's—I am older than you are, Mr. Speaker. I remember when Khrushchev was here. He made the comment when he was the dictator of the Soviet Union that Christianity will never exist in the Soviet Union. It cannot. I don't think it can be legislated out, but Khrushchev was determined to make sure that Christianity and other religious faiths did not exist in the Soviet Union. Of course, I believe it will continue whether or not Christians are persecuted anyway.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have always thought that people from Texas should get more time because we talk slower, and might even think slower. But, anyway, I appreciate the 12 minutes, and I will use it.

Mr. Speaker, I am a cosponsor, and other Members are cosponsors, of a bill that will provide expedited visa protection and processing for Christians and Yazidi refugees from the Middle East. They are targets of genocide in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, and Libya, and we hope to expedite visas for those people who are trying to flee religious persecution.

Hopefully, the President of the United States will address the issues of human rights violations in Vietnam. Members of Congress, including myself, have asked the President to address this when he deals with the country of Vietnam.

And, of course, there is other legislation sponsored by Mr. TRENT FRANKS from Arizona which calls upon the U.S. to use its influence in the United Nations to condemn the ongoing sexual violence against women and children of religious faith.

These young women and girls are being sexually assaulted because of their religious faith or their religious beliefs. A lot of that is being done by ISIS.

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Mr. Speaker, just a couple of other things.

Watchdog groups report that each month 332 Christians are killed by their faith and 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed. Of course Christians, like other religious minorities, have been persecuted for years. A little history is in order here, Mr. Speaker.

In this country, we have religious freedom. We are a nation that believes that all people should have religious freedom.

When our Forefathers got together and they declared independence from Great Britain, which we will celebrate next Tuesday, and they got together and they wrote the Constitution, they added 10 Amendments to the Constitution.

The First Amendment of the Constitution is not first by accident. It is first because it is the most important of all rights, and there are five rights in the First Amendment. The first right in the First Amendment is the most important right. Here is what it is, and I will read just a portion of the Constitution, Mr. Speaker: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Religious freedom is the number one right of Americans. It doesn't just say to believe what you want to believe. It says you have the right to practice it, to get out there and practice it, even in public, number one.

Number two, "Congress shall make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress. . . ."

There are five rights in the First Amendment. The first one: religious freedom.

Many, many people came to this new world seeking religious freedom. That is why they came here, primarily Christian religious freedom. They were being persecuted in Europe. They came to the United States and made sure that we do not persecute people of religious faith.

The opposite is true. It is a right. I feel very strongly, as I think most people do, that it is the first right, and it is the most important right. And it is a human right. It is not just a right for Americans. It is a right for all people.

People in Syria, Iran, North Korea, Yemen, and all those countries I mentioned, those people—who we don't know who they are—have the right, the human right, of religious freedom. That is a basic right of all people everywhere. I hope that we as a people encourage other people and governments throughout the world: Let folks worship the way they want to worship because it is a human right, and, I believe, that we have gotten it from the Almighty.

And the last thing I would comment on is we need to be careful in this country that we don't end up persecuting by legislation or by the judiciary, infringing upon the First Amendment, the first right, of the free exercise of religion. That is a story for another day, Mr. Speaker.

So, as we get close to the Fourth of July, the Declaration of Independence—our ancestors got together and said they wanted freedom, and they

pledged to themselves and to others their sacred honor. Many of them lost everything, the war between us and England, the biggest and most powerful empire that had ever existed. It took over 7 years, but it was worth it.

That is why the Fourth of July is important, because it is a declaration of independence. And it is also, as Thomas Jefferson said in the Declaration of Independence, a statement of human rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that governments are instituted among men to secure those rights.

Mr. Speaker, on the Fourth of July, we need to remember our country, remember the people who lived here and gave us this country, and it is our job to make sure we keep it.

And that is just the way it is.

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

DEVASTATING IMPACTS ILLEGAL MARIJUANA GROW OPERATIONS ARE HAVING ON OUR NATION'S PUBLIC LANDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 30 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I have a presentation here, but, first, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), my friend, who has a very important topic to cover as well. I appreciate his friendship and his strong leadership on the things that really count around here.

LIU XIAOBO RESOLUTION

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my very good friend from California for his graciousness in yielding me this time and for his wonderful work as a Member of Congress on human rights and pro-life issues. I thank him for that leadership.

Mr. Speaker, tonight, I rise and note to my colleagues that the news of Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo's diagnosis of terminal liver cancer was a jarring shock to everyone who admires this champion of freedom and democracy.

Tonight, the House has under consideration an urgent resolution, a truly urgent resolution, H. Con. Res. 67, which I introduced, joined by Ms. PELOSI, and several of the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, she and I together, some bipartisanship in a place where we have had little of it lately. But here we are joined, and we are joined very strongly on behalf of Liu Xiaobo and his dire, dire situation, and that of his wife.

The legislation urges the Government of the People's Republic of China to unconditionally release Liu Xiaobo, together with his wife, Liu Xia, to allow them to freely meet with friends, family, and counsel, and seek medical treatment wherever they desire.

The operative language of the resolution makes it very clear that it recognizes Liu Xiaobo for his decades of

peaceful struggle for basic human rights and democracy and, again, urges that he be able to seek medical care, including treatment in the United States or wherever else he would like to receive it.

I want to thank Majority Leader KEVIN McCARTHY. This resolution was introduced yesterday. The majority leader made sure that this legislation came to the floor just a few hours ago to ensure that we went on the record as a Congress showing our solidarity of Liu Xiaobo and his wife and our deep, deep compassion and concern for the plight that he finds himself in.

I want to thank Speaker RYAN, who also expressed strong concern for Liu Xiaobo, and, of course, NANCY PELOSI and STENY HOYER because this required bipartisan support to bring it up on the UC; and also ED ROYCE, the chairman of the full Committee on Foreign Affairs, the famous gentleman from California, and, of course, the ranking member, ELIOT ENGEL.

Mr. Speaker, in February of 2010, I led a bipartisan group of lawmakers nominating Liu Xiaobo for the Nobel Peace Prize and, at the same time, nominating two other persecuted Chinese human rights advocates, Chen Guangcheng and Gao Zhisheng, to be joint recipients of this most prestigious award. Others, including the great Vaclav Havel, also pushed for Liu to get this important recognition which we had hoped would help push the human rights agenda in China.

The Nobel Peace Prize Committee agreed and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo for his “long and nonviolent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”

I attended the Oslo ceremony, at the invitation of the family, along with Leader PELOSI. It was a moving ceremony, Mr. Speaker. The now famous empty chair spoke volumes about the Chinese Communist Party’s abiding fear that human rights and democracy will undermine its power. There, on the stage, was this chair without the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

After that, I held several hearings both in the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and also on the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, which I co-chair with MARCO RUBIO. And again, we always had a picture of the empty chair where Liu Xiaobo should have been rightly honored and hopefully freed to pursue the righteousness of his human rights work.

He said, in absentia, that day: “Freedom of expression is the foundation of human rights, the source of humanity, and the mother of truth. To strangle freedom of speech is to trample on human rights, stifle humanity, and suppress truth.”

Chinese authorities have gone to great lengths to stifle Liu Xiaobo’s ability to speak truth to power. In 2009, he was given an 11-year prison sentence for “inciting subversion of state power.”

His wife, Liu Xia, also was detained in de facto form “house arrest” since 2010. She is in urgent need of medical care, as well, having been hospitalized for a heart condition. Over the past year, authorities have allowed her to visit her husband only on a very few occasions.

According to Chinese authorities, Liu’s conviction was based on Charter 08, a treatise signed by over 300 intellectuals and activists. That document states that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal values of humankind, and that democracy and constitutional government are the fundamental framework for protecting these values.

Sadly, Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia, his wife, are not alone in facing unjust repression. As of September 2017, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, which collects and maintains probably the most effective and comprehensive political database for any country—and this is on China—contains information on at least 1,400 cases of known political or religious prisoners.

According to the annual report, the government of President Xi Jinping has engaged in an extraordinary assault on the rule of law, human rights, ethnic minority groups, and civil society in recent years.

Under Xi’s leadership, the Chinese Government has pushed through new laws and drafted legislation that would legitimize political, religious, and ethnic repression, further curtail civil liberties, and expand censorship of the internet. And the whole issue of the one child, now maybe two child per couple policy, coercion and population control, continues to harm women and children with extreme hurtfulness. It is just beyond the pale of what a government should be doing to its own people.

It is tempting to be pessimistic about China’s future and the future of U.S. relations. Frankly, I am not pessimistic, despite the circumstances, because I do believe Liu Xiaobo is the future, and people who have his belief in fundamental human rights.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by just saying I believe that someday China will be free; someday the people of China will be able to enjoy all of their God-given rights, and a nation of free Chinese men and women will honor and celebrate Liu Xiaobo as a hero. He will be honored, along with all of the others like him, who have sacrificed so much for so long for freedom.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Mr. SMITH for standing up for that important issue and making that known. So, I thank him, and I appreciate him joining with us tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss the devastating impacts that illegal marijuana grow operations are having on our public lands—even private lands, as well.

As pictured here, this is not an uncommon scene in my district in northern California, in many of the Western

States, or anywhere where people think they can get away with it, where someone may not be paying attention. We see that very often on our Federal lands because, honestly, regrettably, they are not managed very well and they are not managed very often.

We hope to see that turn around under this new administration, this new leadership, that U.S. Forest Service lands have more attention to them, that they are managed more with timber harvest, thinning, things of that nature, to make the forests healthier.

This certainly does not cause a healthier situation for our forests, as you see pictured here, the amount of damage that can come from that. I will tell you a little bit about it here.

The devastating effects inflicted on the habitat and wildlife due to the non-permitted water diversions, extensive grading of the terrain—which, people in agriculture and construction have to get permits to do grading—and use of illegal toxicants and pesticides purchased outside of the United States—chemicals, products you can’t even use here, that haven’t been subjected to an EPA label process that ag chemicals and household chemicals have to do—this is what is coming in and being used on our public lands, poisoning them, poisoning the wildlife, and making it very dangerous for any people that might go in there.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, many threatened and endangered species which we are bending over backwards to try to recover, to try to protect, have tested positive for these poisons and other contaminants used at these illegal grow sites.

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Preliminary tests of game animals, including birds and deer, have also tested positive for these illegal pesticides, again, that are banned by the EPA, not allowed to be used in the United States, haven’t been subject to the labeling requirements that are legal materials that we use in agriculture and other things that they have gone through.

So it is difficult to understand how the Federal Government can spend extensive resources going after farmers, ranchers, miners, whoever for doing legal operations. In agriculture, it might be disking or plowing. In mining, it might be panning for gold or normal mining operations.

So we have people cultivating their land for food. We have people extracting minerals that are needed for our daily lives, whether it is paving a road, driveway, concrete, whatever it might be. We have people legally doing these actions. They are the ones who have been—at least until recent months with the new administration—harassed with rules that hadn’t even been subject to congressional attention.

But at the same time, until recent months, this blatant criminal activity has been allowed to stand.

Is it because law enforcement can’t go into those—areas they are not authorized?

I know local law enforcement is really interested in doing this. But it has been a hands-off approach by some of our Federal officials who have either not wanted to put the resources together or haven't had the wherewithal to put enough of the resources together to go out and enforce on these foreign nationals doing these devastating things to our lands and the danger they cause.

What good are these Federal laws and statutes if we do not properly enforce the law to protect our public lands?

We are protecting, on one hand, again, the wrong people by inaction; and we are criminalizing normal activity, people farming, ranching, mining, et cetera. The priorities have been backwards. I hope to see a big change in that with the new direction of the new administration.

As if the environmental effects are not disturbing enough, the safety of the general public is at risk. Heavily armed drug cartels are using our National Forest to engage in large-scale illegal grow operations. You can see the haul on some of the weapons that have been taken from some of the raids that have been successfully done. This is pretty dangerous stuff.

Somewhere in the picture are people who have grenade-launching devices, if I am not mistaken.

So what kind of situation do we have going on where this kind of heavy armament is coming into our forests?

And on the other hand, law-abiding, Second Amendment-loving Americans are subject to confiscation, threatening a high cost of ammunition, multitudes of anti-gun rhetoric that, again, makes you ask the questions: Who are we protecting and who are we criminalizing?

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for example, has been forced to temporarily close refuge units during hunting season to protect the public from stumbling on to an illegal grow that might be guarded heavily by these criminals with these weapons.

In 2012, the DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Report indicated more than 10,000 or more illegal firearms seized nationwide in raids. This is the people's property. The public should be able to hunt, fish, camp, recreate with their families on it as they wish, safe from this criminal activity.

Unfortunately, the number of illegal grow sites on Federal lands continues to rise at an alarming rate. Even in States that have legalized marijuana for recreational use, like California—regrettably—and Colorado, they still are doing the illegal grows in lands that are in States that have so far legalized marijuana.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, in 2016, the Pacific Southwest region saw a 52 percent increase in marijuana production on Forest Service lands compared to a previous year.

So maybe the answer hasn't been in legalizing marijuana grows. The activity is still going on. It is still a sought-

after market for those people who want to be using it.

While the statistics seem staggering, it is believed that the true number of illegal grows on Federal lands is actually much higher than that 10,000 figure, much higher than what has been documented, much higher than the 52 percent increase that we are talking about.

So with the heavy rainfall that the Western States saw this winter—thankfully, we have gotten the rain—the regions are expecting an even higher surge of illegal marijuana production on the people's public lands.

The law enforcement capabilities of the U.S. Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management are not currently equipped to handle an issue of this high magnitude. These law enforcement officers are doing what they can with the resources allotted and the permission they are allowed by their higher-ups, but we need much more additional means and support to develop a coordinated approach to enforce against these foreign nationals and others that are doing these illegal grows, despite what the public might be wanting with legalized marijuana in their own grows.

While confronting the challenges of illegal marijuana cultivation in our National Forests is a large undertaking, it is important that we face this head on. Strong enforcement needs to come from the Federal Government that is supposed to be overseeing these lands. So we are talking about scenes like this right here. This is what is allowed to happen.

That is why criminalizing people doing legal activities, such as farming, ranching, mining, what have you, for tiny, very narrow occasional violations, this is what is being fostered out there. Look at this. The trash that is allowed to happen; empty chemical containers; everything else involved in the grow; people camping up there illegally, because the Federal Government, until recently, does not seem to have an interest in enforcing against these illegal grows.

Protecting our public lands from these destructive environmental threats, making sure our National Forests are safe for the public's use, for the habitat, for the wildlife, these are of key importance. This is what the public demands that we do. It is our job to keep the public safe and the lands, as well, in good stewardship. Much more needs to be done.

The Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, they have immediate jurisdiction over these. They need to allow and partner with local law enforcement as well, who knows the lands better than anybody in Washington, D.C., ever would.

And I don't need to remind you once again that marijuana is still classified, Federally, as an illegal drug. So these States—no matter how the voters have been duped, coerced, overwhelmed with dollars at the ballot box and on cam-

paigns, this is still an illegal drug. It is an illegal activity that has been going on.

So I hope what we are hearing from the Department of Justice—they will be looking really hard at whether this is even a legal activity in States that have been legalizing marijuana, and the harmful effects it is going to have on society as this stuff gets more powerful, more potent, and more available to kids.

We have a job to do. It all starts right here: taking care of these lands, the habitat and environment for wildlife that we all care about, the habitat for people, and the water quality.

What is going to come out of here as the water runs downstream through this stuff? What is that going to mean for our streams, rivers, lakes, to the water supplies that the people draw from here, that the animals draw from here?

It is not good. So the Federal Government needs to take a stronger approach, whether it is DOJ, in concert with the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and that input from local law enforcement in local communities. This could be a very good team operation if we are allowed to do it and we aggressively go after that.

I am seeing the seeds of that in the conversations that are coming out of our agencies here in Washington, D.C. Let's push forward on that and let's hear from the American public on making this happen as well.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 39 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, July 3, 2017, at 11 a.m.

OATH FOR ACCESS TO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Under clause 13 of rule XXIII, the following Members executed the oath for access to classified information:

KAREN C. HANDEL
RALPH NORMAN

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1805. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of Vice Admiral Joseph W. Rixey, United States Navy, and his advancement to the grade of vice admiral on the retired list, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 1370(c)(1); Public Law 96-513, Sec. 112 (as amended by Public Law 104-106, Sec. 502(b)); (110 Stat. 293); to the Committee on Armed Services.