

solve this problem. It is past time for those games. It is time to solve this crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, America's strength is in our values. In that vein, I rise to talk about human rights and America's historic role as a defender of universal human rights for all peoples.

I have been a member of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe for many years. It is also known as the Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Commission is an independent entity that brings together lawmakers and members of the executive branch to represent the United States at the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was created to explicitly promote human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental, and military cooperation among its 57 member nations, including the United States and Canada, all the countries of Europe, and the former Soviet Union countries.

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed in Finland in 1975, it enshrined among its 10 Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States a commitment to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

Few people have predicted the sweeping, largely unforeseen consequences of the adoption of this document. From this one provision, among the 10 that focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms, there were movements sprung that embraced the Helsinki process as a sword and as a shield. Independent civil societies coalesced around this basic principle and used the followup processes that were set in motion by the Helsinki Final Act to hold their governments' feet to the fire.

In 1976, Congress established the Helsinki Commission with the mandate to monitor and report on compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and, most importantly, to press successive administrations to make human rights and democracy priorities in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

In the subsequent years, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, Solidarity in Poland, and Watch Groups in Moscow, in Kyiv, and in Vilnius sprang up to push for the release of political prisoners and to defend the rights of those who wanted nothing more than to worship and to have the freedom to advocate for reformers and others who sought to reunite with their families across borders.

Through what became known as the Helsinki process, Congress and previous administrations supported the rights of Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, Natan Sharansky, and countless others

who emerged as leaders in their supporting of the historic transitions to freedom 30 years ago with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of communism, the unification of Germany, and as President Bush proclaimed, a "Europe whole and free." The Helsinki process of monitoring, reporting, advocating, urging, meeting, and witnessing was a catalyst for these historic changes.

Most importantly, at a time of historic transition, the countries participating in the Helsinki process all acknowledge that democracy was the only form of government that we could accept and that issues related to human rights and democracy were never matters of internal interference but were matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states. This means, quite frankly, that we have, under the Helsinki Accords, the legitimate right—I would say the obligation—to challenge the failure of any one of those 57 states in its meeting of its Helsinki commitments. That is why it is right that we in the U.S. Senate speak out against Russia or speak out against Turkey or speak out against any member state in the OSCE when it violates these basic principles.

Over the July 4 work period, I was proud to participate in the largest delegation we have ever had to the annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The Parliamentary Assembly—facilitating lawmaker-to-lawmaker interactions and discussions—was established to complement the intergovernmental work being done. One of the OSCE's strengths is that there is a parliamentary dimension. It is not just government officials; it is also parliamentarians who meet to implement these commitments to human rights and good governance.

The OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have been used to advance U.S. interests, including their support for human rights, free elections, combating anti-Semitism and human trafficking, and other initiatives that have come from the U.S. Congress that have then served as the foundation for U.S. positions and, ultimately, agreements that have been adopted by all 57 states that have participated in the OSCE.

I remember discussions in the Congress that dealt with fighting modern-day slavery and trafficking and fighting anti-Semitism. We initiated them in the Congress. Through the Helsinki Commission, we raised them in the Parliamentary Assembly. They then got raised in Vienna, which is where the Ambassadors who represent all of the states meet, and they were adopted as policy in all 57 states. We have had a very positive impact.

During this recent Parliamentary Assembly, I hosted an event called "Countering Hate: Lessons from the Past, Leadership for the Future." As I stated during the event—and I will underscore now—we have observed an uptick in hate-based instances across the OSCE region and beyond—from Pitts-

burgh and Poway to Christ Church. When we fail to act, we endanger not only the most vulnerable within our societies but the very foundations of our democracies.

Given how much has been accomplished by the United States and others through the OSCE over the past 30 years, it is deeply concerning to see our own American President embrace a drawback of universal human rights in our own country and embrace dictators around the world, who rule by promulgating fear and hate.

President Trump has called Turkish President Erdogan a "friend" and has shared love letters with the very brutal Kim Jong Un after calling him "very talented." Turkey, which has been a member of the OSCE since its inception and a member of NATO, has witnessed a dramatic acceleration in President Erdogan's efforts to consolidate power and hobble his political opposition.

His unrelenting pressure on the judiciary and purges of its ranks of judges and prosecutors have left respect for the rule of law and due process in crisis. Tens of thousands have been detained in sweeping dragnets following the failed coup, including independent voices from virtually every sector of society—opposition politicians, civil society activists, journalists, academics, and many more. These vast purges have had a chilling effect on the free press and the freedom of expression.

The Committee to Protect Journalists considers Turkey the world's worst jailer of journalists, with 68 documented cases, although a local Turkish press freedom organization lists more than 130 who have been detained. Reporters Without Borders ranks Turkey as the 157th out of 180 countries for press freedom—its lowest ranking ever. Under emergency powers assumed by President Erdogan after the coup attempt, the Turkish Government closed around 200 media outlets.

As for North Korea, Kim Jong Un has one of the most deplorable human rights records in the world.

According to Human Rights Watch:

Kim Jong Un—who serves as chairman of the States Affairs Commission and head of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea—continues to exercise almost total political control. The government restricts all civil and political liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion. It also prohibits all organized political opposition, independent media, civil society, and trade unions.

President Trump has been repeatedly willing to take the word of former KGB agent Vladimir Putin over his own intelligence services.

On March 3, 2018, in speaking about Chinese President Xi during a private fundraising speech at Mar-a-Lago, he said:

Xi is a great gentleman. He's now president for life—president for life. No, he's great. And look, he was able to do that. I think it's great. Maybe we'll have to give that a shot someday.

That is not who the President of the United States should be embracing.

He has repeatedly praised Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines. This is the same leader who independent press, civil society groups, foreign governments, and international organizations have all confirmed is engaged in the extrajudicial killing of his own citizens—work that President Trump praised as doing an “unbelievable job on the drug problem.”

Mr. Duterte himself, as a former mayor, has admitted to murdering people. That Mr. Trump would laud Mr. Duterte for his barbaric atrocities is outrageous and is another indication that instead of standing up for America’s values, President Trump continues to endorse leaders around the world who violate the very principles that America’s Founding Fathers enshrined in our Constitution.

I mention our Founding Fathers not in passing, but as we recently celebrated our Independence Day on July 4, I quote from the Declaration of Independence, which set our Nation on a path with the ideal that we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; and that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So I was particularly troubled that within days of July 4, the Trump administration, through Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, unveiled what he referred to as a Commission on Unalienable Rights. In his announcement, Secretary Pompeo called this new Commission “one of the most profound reexaminations of the unalienable rights in the world since the 1948 Universal Declaration.”

I, along with many colleagues in the U.S. Congress, fear that this Commission, whose purpose it is to advise the Secretary of State based on the principles of natural law and natural rights, will undermine or curtail State Department advocacy in critical human rights arenas, including women’s health as well as LGBT rights.

For 243 years, with all of her imperfections, America has been a beacon for peoples around the world. Those who have embraced natural law have not been welcoming. They peddle in hate and division. The ACLU notes that references to “natural law and natural rights” are code words often used to undermine the rights of women and the LGBT community. This is just the latest in a string of attacks on women and the LGBT community by this administration. If the President and the Secretary of State want to build on protecting human rights, they will work within the framework that the United States helped to establish, not question the definition or universality of human rights.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, on immigration, during his first days in office, the President began his administration by sign-

ing an Executive order that attempts to impose travel bans on Muslims and to ban refugees. He signed an Executive order that greatly expanded the number of people who were subject to detention and deportation, and practically speaking, he eliminated the focus on the most dangerous, violent criminals in our communities.

The President has tried to deny sanctuary and asylum to those refugees who legally seek protection in our country as they flee violence and persecution in their homelands.

He rescinded protections for the Dreamers and those with temporary protective status, which cast a cloud of uncertainty over the futures of these individuals and their families. It basically put an expiration date on their backs.

In our communities, I think we all know that the Dreamers and those with temporary protected status now have a fear as to whether their futures will be here in the United States. They have been here for a long time, and as we all know, they are part of our communities. The American values of empathy and compassion seemingly no longer find a champion in the White House.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, on voting rights, the Trump administration has rolled back the clock by creating a so-called Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity—designed to suppress the vote—under the guise of trying to prove the problem of nonexistent voter fraud.

The Justice Department changed its position and supported the use of voter ID laws. It backtracked from its earlier position that such laws were intentionally racially discriminatory and designed to suppress minority votes. One of the principles of a democratic state is to get the maximum participation in elections.

The Department of Justice has tried to make it easier for States to purge voters from their rolls, as well as to make it easier for States to make voting changes that could disenfranchise minority voters without there being the proper Federal review or oversight.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mr. President, on criminal justice, the Department of Justice has aggressively rolled back its use of consent decrees, like the one put in place in Baltimore under the Obama administration after Freddie Gray died in police custody.

It is interesting. Since that episode, we have had Members of Congress, along with city officials, ask the Federal Government to do a pattern-or-practice investigation on what led to the consent order because we knew we had a problem in Baltimore’s policing.

The Baltimore consent decree is a perfect example of a joint local-Federal partnership that will help overhaul the police department and provide long-overdue constitutional policing to the citizens of Baltimore.

This Federal civil rights role is critically important—especially after a series of officer-involved shootings of African-American residents—as we try to rebuild trust between the police and the communities they serve.

In terms of free press, President Trump has consistently attacked the free press, notwithstanding the First Amendment’s protections, and particularly has labeled critical news stories as “fake news” in an effort to undermine any critical coverage of his administration. He has shown callous disregard for protecting journalists and the free press both at home and abroad.

As Thomas Jefferson famously wrote, “The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

In terms of LGBTQ rights, the Trump administration has consistently argued that businesses and government contractors have a right to discriminate against customers based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. He has nominated judges who want to turn back the clock on equality and force transgender individuals from the ranks of our military.

Our Nation and form of government are founded on “We the People of the United States.” Yet this President is doing all he can to lessen the power and squelch the voices of perceived opposition.

As we approach the second anniversary of the deadly protests in Charlottesville, VA, I will never forget how President Trump used his bully pulpit to further divide our Nation by equating those who espoused White supremacy with those who were protesting against such White supremacist views.

Let us remember the great civil rights leaders in our history who have struggled to help our Nation form a more perfect union, establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty, as promised by our Constitution. The deadly violence that occurred nearly 2 years ago must never be permitted to happen again.

I strongly condemn all acts of intolerance and remain certain that the moral arc of history, although long, bends toward justice. What is good and just in America is stronger than hate and will prevail.

The Trump administration’s attack on women’s healthcare is unconscionable. Women’s rights are human rights.

The President has taken action to undermine the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the ACA, finalized administrative rules that allow discriminatory practices to domestic and global family planning providers, as well as women seeking reproductive healthcare.

One of the first actions President Trump took in office was to impose an expansion of the global gag rule, which