

people of Burma took to the streets. They engaged in general strikes to peacefully protest the military's overthrow of their fledgling democracy. One woman who was part of the General Strike Committee—one of the main groups behind the protests—said she was participating because "I have a little girl. She's one . . . I don't want her to grow up under a dictatorship like I did."

Before taking to the streets, she told her husband: "Take care of our baby and move on with life if I get arrested or die in this movement."

And she finished by saying: "We will finish this revolution on our own and not hand it over to our children."

Early last year, the country's Parliament was expected to sign off on the recent national elections in which the leading civilian party, the National League for Democracy, and its head, Aung San Suu Kyi, had won more than 80 percent of the seats that were available.

The Burmese military was never under civilian control, and it wasn't happy with these overwhelming results—these results for the National League for Democracy. They had been deluded into thinking and believing that the people of Burma supported their military policies, and so they would support a strong military role in Parliament, which the people of Burma did not.

Thus, the military leaders refused to recognize the outcome of the election. They tried to have the country's supreme court throw out the results as fraudulent. And when that didn't work, they declared a national emergency and surrounded Parliament with soldiers.

Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders were arrested, the nation's infrastructure was seized by the military, and, almost overnight, Burma's decade-long experiment with democracy, as imperfect as it was, was thrown out the window, and the kind of brutal military rule that had governed the country for roughly half a century was reinstated.

The initial reaction from the new military junta seemed restrained. The protests were allowed to go on peacefully, but only for a little while. The restraint didn't last long.

The military leaders who had been leading a brutal, yearlong genocide against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority turned to violence. They turned to violence, as they had done in 1988 and as they had done in 2007, to crush the protests.

One local filmmaker in Yangon, who took it upon himself to document the protests, said that at one protest in late February, "about 100 people marched towards us quickly. I don't know if they were police or they were soldiers. Without warning, they started shooting at us with sound bombs, [with] bullets and [with] gas bombs."

Since then, the military's violence has escalated. They have fired rocket

launchers, burned down homes, launched airstrikes, cut off food supplies to starve entire communities, and shot at unarmed civilians as they fled.

Just last week, there was a report that members of the military went to one village looking for two specific individuals, one of whom was disabled. After shooting and killing these two individuals, they set fire to the entire village.

According to one organization monitoring the situation, nearly 1,500 Burmese citizens have been killed since this coup began a year ago; another 12,000 arrested; with warrants issued—often death warrants issued in absentia—for another 2,000 or so. Those are just the numbers that can be verified, and who knows what the total amount is.

For the Rohingya people, a Muslim population in a largely Buddhist country, the situation has only grown worse. They have been the target of military oppression and genocide. Hundreds of thousands have fled across the border. But the military has continued to crack down even more on the Rohingya population in Rakhine State—a state I visited a few years ago, leading a delegation of Senators and House Members, after the horrific genocide, when some 700,000 people fled, villages were fire-bombed from the air, and helicopters carrying soldiers shot from the air. On the ground, babies were killed in front of their parents, wives were killed in front of their husbands, husbands were killed in front of their wives, and women were raped. It was one of the most horrific genocides in hundreds of villages that occurred at that moment.

But the military now, in spite of all that happened then, is enacting new draconian restrictions on freedom of movement of the Rohingya that remain in Rakhine State. They have engaged in continuous intimidation efforts. They have warned of the dangers of collaborating with rogue groups resisting the military's authority.

Colleagues, the Senate cannot stay quiet in the denial of freedom and the presence of massive human rights violations in Burma. America cannot stay silent in the face of such atrocities. The world must not stay silent in the face of genocide being carried out against any group of human beings.

We must make it undeniably clear to any government around the world that when you systematically persecute your people; when you deny their human rights; when you murder innocent men, women, and children; when you burn down their homes and their communities; when you starve them of food, deny them the opportunity to earn a living or even travel to the next community to see a doctor, there are consequences; that a community of nations will not stand by idly as you commit these horrendous acts; and that we in the Senate will not sit by and fail to give voice about these atrocities.

So for the sake of all the Burmese people who have lost their lives in this coup, for the sake of all those striving to restore democracy, let us pass S. Res. 35, and let us do it this week—"A resolution condemning the military coup that took place on February 1, 2021, in Burma and the Burmese military's detention of civilian leaders, calling for an immediate and unconditional release of all those detained and for those elected to serve in parliament to resume their duties without impediment."

Let's pass that resolution, and let's do it this week, the 1-year anniversary of the coup. And let us work with our allies around the globe to restore freedom in Burma and hold the perpetrators of these atrocities accountable for the crimes that they have committed.

CHINA

Mr. President, this is not only the anniversary of the military coup in Burma; it is also the week of the start of the Winter Olympic Games in China. On this Friday, February 4, the torch will be lit, signaling the start of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, and millions around the world will gather around TVs and smartphones and computers and iPads and every kind of device to watch the spectacle of the opening ceremonies as they unfold in Beijing. For 2 weeks, the audience will cheer as athletes from across the globe achieve the near impossible and join in the sorrow of defeat and the joy of victory.

But while the world's attention focuses on the glamour of the Games, a thousand miles away in Xinjiang Province, millions of Uighurs will continue to suffer from acts of genocide; the people of Hong Kong will still be denied their rights and their freedoms; and untold numbers of political prisoners will languish behind bars in China, many for nothing more than exercising the most basic voice they have as human beings.

Colleagues, we cannot allow the glitz and glamour of Olympic Gold and glory to blind us to the reality of the pain and persecution that so many are suffering under the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian control—people like Mahire Yakup, an insurance saleswoman, a Mandarin tutor, the mother of three, who is currently serving a 6½-year sentence for "funding terrorist activities." That sounds terrible. What has this mother of three done? What did she do? She sent money overseas to Australia to help her parents buy a house.

Since first being taken into custody in March of 2018, Mahire has languished in detention. First, she was taken to a mass internment camp. Then she was moved to a pretrial detention center. She was released twice and taken back into custody twice before being sentenced in December of 2020 to 6½ years behind bars for the crime of helping her parents buy a house. But the whole world knows her real crime and why she is behind bars is she was born in the Uighur minority community.

Mirzat Taher is another member of the Uighur community imprisoned by the Chinese Government for actions that here in the United States people would say: Where is the crime? What have you done wrong?

Years ago, he lived in Istanbul, Turkey, where he worked as a tour guide. In China, especially in Xinjiang Province, traveling abroad is a source of massive suspicion to Chinese officials. After about a year in Turkey, Mirzat moved back to Xinjiang Province. He met a young Uighur woman visiting from Australia. They fell in love. They got married and lived in Xinjiang for a year before they started hearing rumblings of people disappearing and the increased oppression of the Uighur community by the Chinese Communist Party, and they started to make plans to leave the country.

This was in 2017, when China's crackdown on Uighurs and other Muslim minorities was just starting to ramp up and a program of arbitrary mass detention was beginning. As an Australian citizen, his wife was able to get her husband Mirzat a visa, and they booked a flight to Melbourne, but 2 days before they were scheduled to leave, police knocked on the door in the middle of the night. Mirzat's passport was confiscated, and he was interrogated. Once they learned he had spent time in Turkey, the officers made him accompany them—leave his home—to the police station.

He didn't come home that night or the next week or the next month or the next year. It would be 2 years before he saw his wife again. He was locked up in a detention center for 10 months, moved to a mass internment camp, where he and other detainees were subjected to political indoctrination and physical and mental abuse—including, at one point his arms were shackled to the top of a door for an entire day for the crime of speaking some Uighur words.

In May of 2019, Mirzat was suddenly released, and he and his wife tried to get him to Australia, but twice more, the Chinese authorities detained him, until his most recent detention on September 26, 2020, for the alleged crime of "organizing, leading, or participating in a terrorist organization." Last April, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison for charges related to "terrorism" or "separatism," all because, as a young man, he traveled and lived in Turkey for a year.

Go Sherab Gyatso—in fact, separatism is often a common, general-purpose charge used by the Communist Party against those they think might become critical of the policies of the Communist Party.

We take for granted our freedom of speech and our ability to be critical of each other's ideas or support those ideas or those of our own President, but in China, any word or presence in which you might do something other than just praise the party, you may be treated as a criminal and imprisoned for a long period of time.

That charge, separatism, is a charge you can throw around, accusing basically anyone—and in this case, a young man working as a tour guide or a Tibetan scholar and monk like Go Sherab Gyatso, who was sentenced in a closed trial last December to 10 years in prison.

He was originally arrested in October of 2020 after traveling to Chengdu in southwestern China to act as a translator for an ill relative. It is the fourth time that he had been arrested by Chinese authorities. He is a monk. He is a scholar. He is a rights advocate. He has been sentenced with the same state security crime that is so frequently used against his fellow Tibetans of "inciting separatism," simply for having the courage to speak out about protecting and preserving Tibet's environmental, religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage. And he faces a decade in prison.

Separatism—it is the exact same charge that Rinchen Kyi was arrested on last August. She is former teacher, a fellow Tibetan. What was her crime? She expressed her displeasure that the private middle school where she was teaching, which was established to help educate those in the community without the means to receive a formal education—whether they be poor or orphaned children—had suddenly been shut down by the Chinese Government.

No reason was given for the sudden shutdown, but it is believed from local sources that it was because the primary language used at the school was Tibetan—Tibetan language at a Tibetan school—and the school provided Tibetan culture-based learning.

Rinchen Kyi was so disturbed by the closure of the school where she taught, she lost her appetite, basically stopped eating for 2 weeks. Her health deteriorated. She grew weaker. But before her family could get her help, the Chinese police knocked on her door, arresting her on charges of "inciting separatism."

Rinchen Kyi was hospitalized for 2 days in another city hundreds of miles away from home. She was transferred to another undisclosed location and detained. Five months after she was arrested, her status and whereabouts are unknown. Her crime was trying to help educate the poorest children in her community, in their own language and discussing their culture.

The challenges are not just happening in Tibet. The same kinds of efforts to silence voices and information that the Chinese Government doesn't want out in the world is happening right now in Hong Kong.

Earlier this month, Chow Hang-tung, a pro-democracy activist, was sentenced to 15 months in prison for helping to organize a vigil commemorating the victims of the Tiananmen Square massacre. For 30 years, this vigil has been held in Hong Kong on the anniversary of the bloody military crackdown.

As the former vice-chairwoman of the Hong Kong Alliance, which held these vigils, she had helped organize

them for many years, but in 2020, the government banned them, citing COVID-19 restrictions. In spite of that, her organization continued to plan for holding these vigils. They submitted the paperwork. They notified the government. They alerted the police of their intentions to hold the event, just as they had done year after year after year. Then the paperwork was rejected, so they formally appealed the decision, and their appeal failed.

So Chow took to social media, calling on her fellow Hongkongers, who wouldn't be able to hold this gathering, to simply do this: Light a candle in remembrance of the anniversary. She didn't suggest they come to any specific place, didn't suggest they rally in person; just, in your home or wherever you are, light a candle in remembrance.

She also wrote an article in the paper titled "Candlelight carries the weight of conscience and the Hong Kong people persevere in telling the truth." Her article was used against her as evidence of "incitement to knowingly take part in an unauthorized assembly," even though she decided not to call for an assembly and just to ask someone, wherever they are, to light a candle in remembrance. She didn't ask anyone to assemble. She didn't ask anyone to gather. She didn't define a particular place.

The Tiananmen Square massacre by the Chinese Government is perhaps the most censored issue in mainland China. Since China has broken their agreement with Great Britain over Hong Kong, their 50-year agreement, and wiped out the political rights of the people of Hong Kong, talking about Tiananmen in Hong Kong is cause for arrest—even the suggestion of simply lighting a candle.

The Chinese Government tightens its grip on Hong Kong. It wants to erase all information or history related to it, just as they have done on the mainland—that is, in regard to Tiananmen Square—just as they want to suppress the voices of people in Tibet, just as they want to wipe out the Xinjiang Muslim community. They want to make sure that any form of potential resistance to the Beijing Government and their version of the world is silenced and, as we have seen far too many times over and over again, these folks who speak up against them in any way.

This is Li Yuhua. She is 65. She was a human rights lawyer known in China's human rights community as "big sister." She was held in custody for 4 years before getting a trial. She was charged with that obscure crime of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble"—another catch-all phrase used to lock up anybody the Chinese Government sees as criticizing anything they do.

Everyone in China has to live in immediate fear of being arrested should they voice their inner opinions on something going wrong in the country,

something they want changed, something they want improved, something that disagrees with the official line of the Communist Party.

She is in poor health, as indicated by the fact that when she was arrested, they had an ambulance outside. Actually, the ambulance was outside where the trial was held. She suffers from heart disease, hypertension, and hyperthyroidism, and her long time behind bars has made things worse. Staff at the detention center where she had been held reportedly instructed other inmates to urinate on her food, deny her hot water for showers, deny medical treatment, and threaten to beat her to death—because she was a human rights advocate.

In March of 2018, almost 4 years ago, Li went on a hunger strike to protest her mistreatment, which led detention center officials to force-feed her.

Like many others, Li Yuhan had the courage to stand up for what is right, and she is mercilessly persecuted for doing so.

These various individuals and the way that they are treated are the kinds of abuses that will be going on at the same time as the Winter Olympic Games are held in China. Figure skaters fly across the ice, and while they do so, Li Yuhan will continue to suffer in custody for standing up for human rights. Bobsledders will careen down the track at lightning-fast speeds; Chow Hang-tung will continue to be punished for trying to ensure his cultural history is remembered. As skiers race down the slalom slopes, Go Sherab Gyatso and Rinchen Kyi will still be locked up for sharing and defending their culture.

As athlete after athlete climbs the podium to have beautiful bronze, silver, and gold medals around their necks, Mahire Yakup and Mirzat Taher will go on languishing in prison cells for the crime of being born in the Uighur community.

That is the backdrop of this year's Beijing Olympic Games—human rights abuses, genocide, the destruction of freedom and democracy. And we cannot allow that to be ignored or overshadowed. We cannot allow for that to be forgotten in the glitz and glamour of Olympic Gold. We cannot let these names and these faces and countless, countless others who have faced the same be lost in the shadows of the flames of the Olympic torch.

The world must join together to say to the International Olympic Committee that never again can the perpetrators of human rights abuses be allowed to host a treasured event like the Olympic Games. Never again can the athletes of the world ask to be essentially conspirators in the glitz and glamour of covering up genocide.

And, for all of us, we need to remind the world throughout these games of what is going on in China. Do not let the Chinese Government succeed in having the world forget about their massive human rights violations—their

genocide, their torture, their elimination, their imprisonment, their complete crushing of the rights of people of Tibet and Hong Kong, the complete destruction of the right to speech and the right to religion within their country, the complete obliteration of the human spirit. We cannot allow all that to be forgotten during these Olympic Games.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### CHINESE INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, before the holidays, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, USCC, released its 2021 Report to Congress. As is customary, the report reflects a bipartisan consensus, with unanimous support from the 11-member commission. It includes 32 recommendations to the Congress, each of which is worth serious consideration, especially in light of the announcement that Chinese President Xi Jinping will rule for at least another 5 years.

This is not the first time that I have spoken about China and the importance of increasing our Nation's competitiveness. I think we all recognize that it is an issue that impacts, directly or indirectly, the lives of every American. Today, I want to call attention to China's expansionist foreign policy, particularly one section of the USCC's report that discusses Chinese investments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chinese foreign policy has become increasingly bold, with goals that are both economic and political. China's economic goals are twofold: increasing access to raw materials while developing new markets for Chinese products. China has supported growth in parts of Latin America by financing mining, transportation, electric power generation, large scale agriculture, and other infrastructure projects.

However, there is a dark side to this increased investment and trade. Countries' reliance on commodity exports and China's control over supply chains strengthen China's influence in Latin American and Caribbean economies. With so much of these countries' economies dependent on continued trade and positive diplomatic relations with China, it is no wonder that we see some governments bypassing regulatory standards in order to obtain fur-

ther investment opportunities. This increased dependence can undermine democratic institutions, weaken environmental and social safeguards, and encourage corruption and violations of human rights. The Chinese Communist Party is promoting its own political agenda by supporting authoritarian regimes, promoting pro-China media, and strong-arming governments into isolating Taiwan.

The USCC makes five recommendations to counter these trends: first, respond to Chinese economic, diplomatic, and security initiatives by expanding U.S. funding mechanisms for infrastructure projects, the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, and educational exchanges; second, increase support for governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to create foreign investment review processes and require the Department of State to report to Congress on progress; third, require the Director of National Intelligence, Department of State, and Department of Defense to submit an unclassified report detailing the implications of Chinese investment in port infrastructure, Chinese military presence at such ports, and the potential for leveraging such ports for Chinese military purposes in the future; fourth, require that all applications for U.S. foreign assistance include a disclosure of debt owed to Chinese entities; and finally, create a partnership between coastal Latin American countries and U.S. Government authorities identified in the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement Act to increase maritime domain awareness and combat illegal Chinese fishing.

I urge the administration to consult with Congress on a path forward to implement each of these recommendations.

The Senate's fiscal year 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill includes \$653.8 million for assistance for the countries of Central America, including \$100 million for localized development in the Northern Triangle. Additional funds are included for economic and security assistance for the Caribbean countries. We must support programs in these countries that prioritize the well-being of their citizens, protect their national sovereignty, and encourage fair trade and investment by supporting community policing, maritime security, energy independence, elementary and secondary education, anti-gang programs, employment opportunities, programs to improve government transparency and accountability, and by strengthening civil society. These are long-term investments, but they will provide the most effective alternatives to Chinese influence.

### SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on January 6, 2022, I made a statement about the extreme hardships and insecurity that are a daily reality for the people