

which included a weekend, to inject Federal law enforcement into local debates with concerned parents.

Clearly, the Attorney General is capable of taking action very quickly, but that seems to only be when an administrative priority is of concern. I hope the Biden administration and the Garland Department of Justice would be as concerned about the protection of confidential taxpayer information as they are about monitoring concerned parents who testify before a school board.

If the Department of Justice and the FBI want to show that they take the confidentiality of taxpayer information seriously, they can start by fully and completely responding to my letter of June 24, which hasn't yet been responded to. More than a full year, with a complete filing season, is too much time to have gone by without having any information on this leaking of taxpayer information being provided to any extent.

Democrats constantly spoke of the need for fairness in the tax system as they pushed through partisan tax-and-spending bills. Yet we have heard barely a peep out of our Democratic colleagues on what may be the largest unauthorized disclosure of taxpayer information in history.

While we continue to wait for answers, we have learned of another massive breach of taxpayer information.

On the first Friday of September, we learned the IRS mistakenly published on its website private information from about 120,000 taxpayers. According to Politico, the disclosure consisted of "details from business tax returns filed by tax-exempt organizations and retirement accounts, included people's names, business contact information and income produced by certain investments."

Clearly, the ability of the IRS to safeguard taxpayer information is still an ongoing issue.

This new revelation should light a very big fire underneath the FBI to get at the bottom of the ProPublica leak or hack. Attorney General Garland and FBI Director Wray must fully respond to my letter and help all of us really understand if our tax system is safe and secure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EGYPT

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, Egypt is one of America's closest allies. Our taxpayers send them more direct funding for their military than we send almost any other nation in the world.

But here is what happens to political opponents of the Egyptian regime when they get arrested—and they get arrested at a dizzying rate and get sent to the infamous Tora prison. Arrivals there are blindfolded and then are forced to run through a human corridor of guards who pummel them with sticks until they collapse.

Following this initiation for political prisoners, many of them are routinely beaten and tortured for months or years on end, often with no formal charges being filed. Some never make it out alive.

Human rights groups estimate that there are around 60,000 political prisoners in Egypt.

I get it. The big numbers sometimes lose their meaning in this place. But, by comparison, estimates are that Russia has 420. China likely has around a thousand. Egypt locks up 60,000 political opponents of the regime.

To keep up with the demand of President El-Sisi's imprisonment spree, the country has had to build 60 new detention centers over the last decades. These prisons house some of the country's most prominent human rights defenders, journalists, opposition leaders, but also just ordinary people who are locked up for years because they just attended a protest or they liked a Facebook post or they recorded a TikTok video.

Let me tell you a story of just one of these 60,000 people. Right now, one of my constituents is suffering through the pain and uncertainty of having a relative unjustly imprisoned in Egypt. Muhammad Amasha is studying at Yale University, pursuing his Ph.D. Meanwhile, his father, Dr. Ahmed Amasha, was imprisoned in Egypt from 2017 to 2019 and rearrested and jailed again in June of 2020. According to the U.N., his detention seems "to constitute [an act of reprisal] against Dr. Amasha for documenting cases of enforced disappearances for the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations."

Since his arrest in 2020, Dr. Amasha reportedly has endured abuse during his interrogations that resulted in broken ribs and other significant injuries. His abuse included rape, electrocution, threats to rape his wife, and physical abuse while blindfolded. He was forced to sign a written confession during his time of abuse.

Since President El-Sisi came to power in 2013, more than a thousand people have died in Egyptian custody. Fourteen percent of those deaths were torture. More than 70 percent are because of a denial of healthcare.

This isn't an adversary of the United States. This is Egypt, our ally. Every day that we continue to send billions of dollars to the Egyptian Government, while paying lip service to these egregious human rights violations, it is a blow both to our Nation's character and to our credibility around the world.

For the last several years, I fought to change our Egypt policy, and for the

first time, in fiscal year 2021, we conditioned, with no waiver, \$75 million of Egypt's \$1.3 billion military aid package on "making clear and consistent progress on releasing political prisoners and providing detainees with due process of law." Because there is no waiver, the administration either has to certify that Egypt has made this progress to merit the release of the money or that they haven't made that progress and withhold the money.

The record is clear that they have not. Let me just provide one way of measuring "clear and consistent progress" on releasing political prisoners. A group of Egyptian human rights organizations submitted a list of 2,954 known political prisoners to the government's Presidential Pardon Committee earlier this year. These are people who should not be in jail. They simply protested the government. And if you are going to be an ally of the United States, you shouldn't be locking people up for political speech. But of those 2,954 detainees, the government released 49. That is not "clear and consistent progress."

Another metric: Since April, Egypt's terrorism courts have ordered the release of 417 prisoners. But over that same time period, at least 4,400 political prisoners have had their detentions renewed by the courts. That is not "clear and consistent progress." It is progress, but it is always one step forward and two or three steps backward, at best.

Egypt has certainly not made the kind of progress required to merit the release of \$75 million.

In addition to that piece of funding tied to political prisoners, Congress has also tied an additional \$225 million of Egypt's military aid to "sustained and effective steps" to improving Egypt's human rights record—a broader record of human rights abuses. The statute lays out that, in order to receive this money, Egypt needs to allow NGOs and the media to operate freely, protect women and religious minorities, hold security forces accountable when they violate human rights, and investigate and prosecute these cases of forced disappearances.

Again, the record is overwhelmingly clear that things in Egypt have gotten worse on these fronts, not better, over the last year. Journalists are regularly still charged with "joining a terrorist group" or "spreading false news" for any critical reporting. Just last week, four journalists from the independent outlet Mada Masr were charged with a single news article that documented corruption within a political party close to the President.

Earlier this year, human rights lawyer Youssef Mansour was charged with "inciting terrorism" after he wrote a social media post denouncing prison conditions.

Egypt is also not content with imprisoning its critics at home but increasingly is pursuing its critics abroad. News reports emerged in December that a prominent opposition

leader who lives in exile in Turkey had his phone hacked with NSO group software. In January, the U.S. Justice Department arrested a foreign agent here acting on behalf of Egypt. This is not the behavior of a foreign government that has made “significant progress” toward improving human rights to merit the release of \$225 million.

Lastly, every year when we have this debate, there are always proponents who argue that, even though Egypt has this horrific human rights record, we should give them the money anyway. The argument is that because Egypt is a really important strategic ally, if we withhold just a portion of the \$1.3 billion, Egyptians might stop cooperating with us or shop around for another partner.

Let me just take a minute to address the fallacy of this argument. First, Egypt does provide strategic benefits to the United States. Egypt provides counterterrorism cooperation. It shares intelligence with us about shared threats. Access to the Suez Canal is critical for the United States. When violence does flare up in Gaza, Egypt often steps in and helps mediate and facilitate a truce through its ties with Hamas. There are good reasons for the United States and Egypt to be partners.

And it is not crazy that we give them military aid, but we shouldn't delude ourselves into thinking that reducing our aid from \$1.3 billion to \$1 billion, after giving Egypt an entire year to meet these commonsense conditions, is going to cause the sky to fall. Just last year, the administration actually did withhold \$130 million of Egypt's aid. Of course, the Egyptians were angry. It probably did make our diplomats' life a little bit harder in Egypt, but, by and large, our relationship didn't change. The Egyptians still cooperated with us on counterterrorism. They provided Suez overflight access. They again facilitated a truce in Gaza.

Why? Because all of these areas in which we engage are beneficial for the Egyptians. They don't do it as simple payback for our aid. They engage with us on these issues. They engage with Israel because it is good for Egyptian security, notwithstanding whether they get \$1 billion or \$1.3 billion from the United States.

We also sent a signal to the Egyptians by withholding some of that money last year. And while we didn't see significant improvements, we did see some political prisoners released.

This year, we have to keep the pressure up. The United States needs not just to talk the talk when it comes to human rights abroad; we need to be able to walk the walk as well. And the decision that the administration will make this week as to whether to comply with the conditions set forth by Congress on holding the Egyptians accountable for progress on human rights is critical to American credibility globally when it comes to our call to protect human rights and democracy

abroad, and, for that reason, I would urge the administration to withhold the full \$300 million as called for by the appropriations act until Egypt's record gets better.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, like you, I am proud to represent the city of Chicago. On Friday, returning back home to Chicago, I had a chance to see the best of that great city. I traveled to the Salvation Army Freedom Center in Humboldt Park, in the city of Chicago, where residents from around our city have come together to welcome the families who are seeking refuge in America.

Our city's agencies, State agencies, members of the faith community, and kind families have stepped up to provide supplies—the basics: clothing and such—and a safe place to sleep for many of these people who have come to America. These modest acts of generosity have changed everything for the families who have arrived at that Salvation Army Freedom Center because, for the first time in months, they feel safe and secure. And that is exactly why they left their home in the first place: to survive.

In Chicago, we are honored to offer a warm, welcoming hand to these families escaping unimaginable circumstances because in them we see ourselves, we see America, we see our history as a nation. And for me, personally, I see my own family.

Back in 1911, a young Lithuanian woman set sail for America. She carried two things with her: her Catholic prayer book, published the year before the Czars outlawed it in the nation of Lithuania; and her 2-year-old daughter Ona, my mother.

More than a century stands between my mother's arrival in America and the arrival of families I met Friday, but in many ways it is the same story. America opened its doors to my family all those years ago and gave us a chance to find a place for a new land of opportunity. Today, it is our responsibility to welcome families fleeing violence and persecution, families seeking nothing more than safety and a fair shot. This is fundamental to who we are as Americans, but, sadly, it seems that some in politics think otherwise.

You see, there is a reason these families arrived in Chicago, and it is not because they booked a bus on their own accord. It is because the Governor of Texas has chosen to exploit this humanitarian challenge to score political points. When these families arrived at our Nation's border seeking asylum,

what did the Governor of Texas do? He didn't help. He took advantage of the fear and confusion. He rounded these families up, boarded them onto a bus, and shipped them to cities like Chicago and New York without even telling them where they were headed and without any consultation with their destination States. This is cruelty of the highest degree.

The Governor of Texas didn't provide any notice to Illinois or Chicago. He bused them to our Union Station downtown, nearly 1,500 miles away from their Texas border, without sending as much as a text message in advance. No logic. No rationale. Just plain meanness.

Look, we can have reasonable disagreements about how to address the situation at our Nation's border, but there is no excuse for playing games with human lives. It is not the first time. Sadly, it is the playbook for many of the other party. You will recall when President Trump, the nominee or candidate, stood up and said they are all murderers and rapists coming in from Mexico, or do you remember when more than a thousand children—infants and toddlers—were separated from their parents at the border? Some of them are still adrift, never being reunited with their families.

One of the people I met on Friday was a man named Carlos. He and his wife are from Venezuela, a country with an economic and political crisis so severe that their family feared persecution and was on the brink of starvation, even though Carlos was a hard worker, always looking for a job.

So on May 15—May 15—Carlos and his wife did what they needed to do. Imagine this, if you will. They picked up their two children—a 5-year-old little girl and a 1-year-old infant—and set out on a trip to the United States. They set out on foot to reach the Texas-Mexico border. Their journey was a nightmare: violence, theft, and exploitation.

Carlos told me that at one point he thought he would die, with his wife and kids forced to spend nine nights in a Panamanian jungle. They were finally rescued by a local military force, but they had lost all their money, their cell phones. Everything had been stolen.

They didn't quit. They were determined, slowly making their way across Central America, primarily on foot, stopping from time to time. Carlos said: I would take any work they would give me. I would sell things on the street—whatever it was—to feed my family.

It took 4 long months for them to reach our Nation's border, and they had no destination in mind when they arrived, no contacts. They simply followed instructions, and then they were placed on a bus by the Governor of Texas that took them to the city of Chicago.

Carlos had no intention of ending up in this great city when he and his family arrived in America, but he told me,