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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Here we are again, Lord, a people in need of Your presence and power in order to meet life with courage, faith, and perseverance. Today, strengthen the Members of this body with a faith that will ever choose the harder right over the easy expedient.

Lord, give our Senators wisdom to follow Your example of sacrificial service, infusing them with the courage to do right as You give them the light to see it. Lift from our world the burdens of loss and sorrow when forces beyond our control invade our lives and seek to rob us of Your peace.

Lord, bless the people of our world with the assurance that they are never alone, for You have promised never to forsake them.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 6, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate a communication of the Secretary of the Senate regarding a message from the President received during the adjournment of the Senate.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: On Friday, November 3, 2023, the President of the United States sent by messenger the attached sealed envelopes addressed to the President of the Senate dated November 3, 2023, said to contain messages regarding the President's notification to the Congress consistent with section 8 of the Fisherman's Protective Act of 1967, as amended, and regarding the continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Threat From Securities Investments That Finance Certain Companies of the People's Republic of China. The Senate not being in session on the day which the President delivered this message, I accepted the message at 3 p.m., and I now present to you the President's message, with the accompanying papers, for disposition by the Senate.

Respectfully,

SONCERIA A. BERRY,
Secretary of the Senate.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Monica M. Bertagnolli, of Massachusetts, to be Director of the National Institutes of Health.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, as Israel continues to root out the Hamas terrorists who savaged innocent civilians on October 7, the political left here in America appears to be engaged in a loud public debate with itself over how, exactly, to differentiate indiscriminate slaughter and lawful self-defense.

Last week, an especially radical House Democrat repeated to her followers a call to eliminate the Jewish State "from the river to the sea." Then she attempted to explain away the undeniably genocidal connotation of this longstanding anti-Israel slogan as "peaceful coexistence."

Apparently, Jews can live in peace with Palestinians as long as they vacate Israel.

Unfortunately, the shameful moral equivalence that has been creeping across elite and influential corners of the left has now been embraced by a former Commander in Chief. Just a few

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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days ago, President Obama used the same breath to express his horror at both Hamas violence and a supposed Israeli “occupation” of Gaza. In reality, the only force that has occupied Gaza since 2007 is Hamas, not Israel.

The former President also said “all of us are complicit to some degree.” That is simply false. Responsibility lies with the terrorists.

So perhaps President Obama has forgotten the bloody campaign to defeat ISIS over which he presided or the destruction of cities like Mosul and Raqqa in pursuit of medieval Islamic tyrants who terrorized innocent civilians.

I don’t recall President Obama doubting the righteousness of American efforts to support local partners in rooting out terrorists in Iraq and Syria. Where is that moral clarity in the face of Hamas?

Unfortunately, that brings me to the growing number of many of our Senate colleagues who have called for a ceasefire in today’s terrorist war. I would remind our colleagues that Israel had negotiated a ceasefire with Hamas over the summer, and we all saw where that led on October 7. Returning to any such arrangement right now would be amnesty for these butchers—the butchers of innocent Israelis and Gazans alike.

Once again, let’s remember who the aggressor is. Hamas is blocking citizens from leaving Gaza City. Hamas has intentionally put its weapons caches inside schools, hospitals, and mosques, and its firing positions in the midst of civilian populations. Hamas has poured countless billions of dollars in humanitarian assistance into its terror tunnels.

These people are not freedom fighters. They do not want peaceful coexistence. They are savages—savages—cut from the same cloth as ISIS and al-Qaida. There is no room for moral equivalency. The distinction between good and evil here is blindingly obvious.

Fortunately, some do recognize this. The Vice Chancellor of Germany, a member of his country’s Green Party, didn’t have any trouble finding the moral clarity this moment requires. In an address to the nation last week, he said:

Hamas does not want reconciliation with Israel, but the extermination of Israel. And this is why it is pivotal to make it clear that Israel’s right to exist must not be relativized. Israel’s security is our obligation.

American politicians who cannot bring themselves to acknowledge the same should really be ashamed of themselves.

This weekend marked 44 years since Iranian revolutionaries overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans hostage. Today, Americans are once again held hostage by forces aligned with Iranian tyranny. Many more Israelis are held alongside them, and Israel deserves the time and space and support it needs to bring these terrorist captors to justice.

In the days immediately following October 7, I warned that President Biden would be pressured to withhold this support, and that familiar and morally bankrupt calls for ceasefire would threaten Israel’s ability to see its defensive operations through. And so here we are, nearly a month later, watching the movement to grant Hamas amnesty reach the highest levels of our government.

War is a bloody business. That is the reality Israel faces. We should be careful before second-guessing their efforts to get innocent Israelis—and Americans—home safely and to destroy Hamas’s ability to wage war.

CRIME

Madam President, on another matter, while the United States and our allies face terrorist and authoritarian violence abroad, the American people continue to face waves of unchecked violence here at home.

Just last month, a member of our colleague Senator BRITT’s staff was robbed at gunpoint right outside of her apartment building. Thankfully, this young woman was not injured.

But stories like hers have become all too common in our Nation’s Capital. According to Washington Metropolitan Police, robbery in the city has increased by 70 percent this year—70 percent. Motor vehicle theft is up 101 percent.

And, in the midst of rising violent crime, a particularly alarming spate of anti-Semitic violence has come to a head in the wake of October 7. In New York City, authorities have recorded 66 anti-Semitic hate crimes in just the last month.

On October 14, exactly 1 week after Hamas’s deadly attack, a 29-year-old woman was beaten on the subway in Manhattan. The attacker reportedly told the victim that the reason for his attack was because “you are Jewish.”

A Jewish deli in the city was vandalized with multiple images of the swastika symbol.

And, of course, murderous threats against Jewish students at Cornell University have prompted an FBI investigation.

In just the first 2 weeks after October 7, the threat of anti-Semitic violence against American Jews nearly quadrupled. The American left has gone out of its way to downplay the threats they face with everything from “both sides” statements to outright incitement.

All Americans deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. It is long past time for Democrats to take the historic waves of violence in America seriously.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 7 weeks ago, on September 21, the U.S. Senate, on a bipartisan basis, gathered with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in the Old Senate Chamber. We don’t often use that Chamber. It is often used for incidents that become embed-

ded in history, and this was one of them. It was a historic moment.

Many things were said about the courage of the Ukrainian people and the heroism of the troops fighting Russian President Vladimir Putin’s unjust war, but I recall one particular plea made by President Zelenskyy—and he repeated it. So it was clear he wanted us to remember. I will stress here what he said:

Without the continued financial support of the United States and NATO, we will lose this war.

He was unequivocal.

Secretary of Defense Austin told me clearly at last week’s Senate Appropriations Committee hearing that he agreed with Zelenskyy.

Secretary of State Blinken added that such assistance is critical in thwarting not just Putin but aggressors around the world who are watching and gauging our sustained commitment.

I agree completely. Looking at the world today, I do not believe it is a stretch to say that freedom is currently under siege and fighting for its future. Right now, several democracies across the globe are fighting against tyrannical powers—in some cases, autocratic governments; in others, terrorist organizations—that seek to undermine the global order. But this much is clear: Democratic values are under siege, and the United States and our generation have a responsibility to act.

Two weeks ago, President Biden requested \$106 billion in supplemental funding for national security. This includes money to help supply Ukraine with weapons to continue its valiant fight against Russian aggression. It includes money to help Israel defend itself against Hamas, which, on October 7, perpetrated the largest attack against Jewish people than on any single day since the Holocaust. And, importantly, it also includes billions of dollars to support humanitarian needs across those conflict zones around the world, including the crisis in Gaza, because, as important as it is to support nations like Ukraine in their struggle against tyranny, it is equally as important to support innocent citizens who so often become collateral damage and bear the brunt of suffering during periods of conflict.

At the Appropriations Committee hearing last week, Secretaries Blinken and Austin underscored the necessity of this funding request. They made clear that it is critical to deliver the urgent national security priorities as laid out in the President’s request.

These challenges facing the world are interrelated. So it is important that we deliver aid in one unified package that speaks to America’s values abroad.

I asked Secretaries Blinken and Austin about the recent visit by the terrorist organization Hamas leadership to—believe it or not—Putin in Moscow. Secretary Blinken was blunt: Putin is allied with any effort that may distract the United States from the war in