

that this Nation has and must continue to be a global defender of freedom and democracy.

Our failure to fulfill this vital role and turn a blind eye to systemic injustices around the world, particularly in the African Continent and the Caribbean region, is not only unethical, but it is un-American. It also has legal ramifications, not just for the people, economy, and stability of those nations, but lethal ramifications for our own safety and national security.

The African Continent and the Caribbean region have long suffered from a legacy of slavery and colonialism, symptoms of which have led many of these countries to be volatile and prone to political and economic instability.

For example, Haiti had to pay France for its freedom. After winning a revolution, they had imposed on them a debt to the French Government for that freedom, for the lost revenues of slavery, if you can believe that.

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They have had to pay literally \$28 billion to France. Literally, as my 14 year old would say, literally.

Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of the Nation's economy went to debt services. The precarious state of these nations has positioned them to be prime targets for foreign influence. Now U.S. adversaries, such as China and Russia have been proliferating throughout the African Continent and China, particularly in the Caribbean Basin, exploiting those vulnerabilities for profit and to expand strategic interests.

The Chinese multinational Huawei has constructed roughly 70 percent of Africa's information technology infrastructure and continues to make similar investments in the Caribbean Basin in its Belt and Road Initiative. Over 10 nations have signed agreements to open their borders up to Chinese influence.

Russia has bolstered its ties and influence as well, primarily through mercenary groups such as the Wagner Group. Between 2015 and 2019, Moscow signed 19 military collaboration agreements with African Governments.

By exploiting the instability of those nations, Russia has established African reliance on military to secure access to resources, extracting minerals, such as cobalt, gold, and uranium from the continent.

Furthermore, Russia and China's involvement undermines the continent's democratic aspirations, driving conflict, worsening human rights abuses, and spurring growing militarization in governance: Niger in 2023, Mali in 2022, Sudan in 2021, Guinea in 2023, Burkina Faso in 2024. These were all coups in the last few years, displacing democratically elected governments with military juntas.

For years, the world has witnessed the Republic of Haiti face a profound political, security, and humanitarian crisis. The severity of the situation has far surpassed the usefulness of words.

We are operating on borrowed time. Our hands-off and apathetic approach to Haiti is an affront to our values. Following President Jovenel Moise's assassination, gangs seized complete control, creating a humanitarian catastrophe.

Since February, 15,000 people have been displaced adding to the 362,000 already internally displaced in the country. The hunger crisis worsens as armed groups block food supply routes.

The approval of the State Department's funding request to support a Kenya-led multinational security support mission to Haiti is critical, as it will train and bolster the Haitian National Police, align with U.S. national security interests, and showcase decisive leadership.

Blocking \$40 million in aid by GOP leadership, despite the risk of a worsening humanitarian crisis and potential migration surge is unacceptable. Without the release of those funds, our borders will be overrun, and people will die. We must do better.

COMMEMORATING THE 36TH ANNIVERSARY OF GAS ATTACKS ON HALABJA-IRAQI KURDISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, 36 years ago this week, Saddam Hussein unleashed a nightmare upon the peaceful Kurdish town of Halabja, forever etching it into the annals of crimes against humanity. The atrocity perpetrated against the genocidal Anfal campaign stands as a stark reminder of the depths of cruelty that humanity is capable of.

The horrors inflicted upon the people of Halabja on that fateful day, as they were mercilessly attacked with mustard gas and nerve agents, resulted in the instantaneous loss of thousands of innocent lives.

Yet, the true extent of the devastation did not end there. For many survivors, the aftermath of the chemical onslaught continues to plague them, manifesting in debilitating health conditions, staggering rates of cancer, and haunting birth defects. The scars of Halabja run deep, both physically and emotionally, reverberating through the generations as a painful testament to the brutality of war.

But Halabja was not an isolated incident. It was but one chapter in the harrowing saga of the Anfal campaign. Over the course of 2 years, more than 180,000 civilians perished, their villages razed to the ground, and their way of life shattered beyond recognition.

The landscape of Kurdistan bears the indelible scars of this campaign of terror, a stark reminder of the price paid for silence in the face of evil.

As we gather today 36 years later to commemorate the victims of Halabja and the Anfal campaign, we must do more than mourn the loss. We must condemn unequivocally the genocide

that was perpetrated against the Kurds and reaffirm our commitment to upholding the sanctity of human life.

Let us pledge to never again allow such horrors to unfold unchecked, to stand as guardians of peace and justice in a world too often marred by violence and indifference.

In honoring the memory of those who perished in Halabja, let us also honor the resilience of the survivors, whose spirit remains unbroken despite the unimaginable sufferings they have endured. May their courage inspire us to redouble our efforts in the pursuit of a future where atrocities like those committed in Halabja are but distant memories, never to be repeated again.

Mr. Speaker, I will also take a moment to thank our Kurd allies for their friendship and their partnership in the fight against ISIS, al-Qaida in Iraq and Shia militias in Iraq. I deployed four times, and the Kurds were our great allies, and I always will remain grateful.

Finally, today is March 21, the Kurdish New Year. The rich cultural heritage, resilience, and determination of the Kurdish people continue to inspire us all. I wish to congratulate the Kurds around the world a happy new year. May this new year bring you abundant blessings, renewed hope, and countless opportunities for growth and success. "Happy New Year," in Kurdish, "Newroz Piroz Bit."

WE NEED TO ENHANCE SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to draw attention to the Nation's number one antipoverty program for the elderly and the Nation's number one antipoverty program for our children. It is something that everyone is familiar with: It is Social Security. This Congress and previous Congresses have not done anything to enhance Social Security, Mr. Speaker, in more than 50 years. Richard Nixon was the President of the United States the last time Congress enhanced benefits for what now amount to 70 million Americans.

Mr. Speaker, in your district alone, 176,794 Social Security recipients haven't received an enhancement in more than 50 years.

This is also the Nation's leading economic development program because in your district, \$300 million comes into your district monthly. Where do those people spend that money? Right back in your district at the local grocery store, at the pharmacy, at the gas station, pay off their rent, et cetera.

It is the Nation's number one antipoverty program for a reason because of the genius of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who saw in a capitalistic system like ours there needs to be a safety net and a balance.

For more than 40 percent of all Americans on Social Security, it is the only pension benefit that they have.

Speaker pro tempore MILLER was in the chair earlier, and there are over 160,000 of her constituents on Social Security. What Congress needs to do is vote.

Now, my good friend KEVIN HERN says that you have a plan on the other side to cut benefits. We see that President Trump has laid out his proposal that he would like to cut Social Security benefits. Cutting benefits is not the way to save Social Security.

The President and Democrats have a very specific plan: to enhance benefits across the board and extend the solvency of Social Security so that all of our constituents can receive the benefits they richly deserve.

Mr. Speaker, 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security, which is not an entitlement. With all the discussion about the debt and deficit, it doesn't contribute a single penny to the debt or deficit. It is a paid-for program.

The business community pays half and gets a full tax deduction for it and individuals pay the other half. How do they know? All they have to do is go to their pay stub and look at the word "FICA," that stands for Federal Insurance Contributions Act.

Whose contribution? Theirs.

Mr. Speaker, that is 176,794 people in your district who make these contributions. This is not an entitlement. This is a benefit that they have earned and the only body that can address this is the United States Congress. It is long overdue for us to take this up on behalf of our constituents. If there is a better idea or you think that further study is needed, put it on the floor and let's have a vote on it.

Everybody professes how much they love and respect Social Security. Where is the plan? Where is the vote that people can say this is what my Representative stands for and this is what we are going to receive?

We don't need to cut benefits for Social Security. We need to enhance them. We need to make sure that WEP and GPO get repealed. We have to make sure that people are no longer paying income tax on their Social Security. We have to make sure that that happens now.

RECOGNIZING MAYOR PAUL McDONALD OF AGANA HEIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Guam (Mr. MOYLAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mayor Paul McDonald of Agana Heights as he serves his last term representing his beloved village.

Being born and raised in Agana Heights, Mayor McDonald has devoted himself to the betterment of his village over the course of eight consecutive terms in office. He has earned the respect of his constituents through his hard work and commitment to deterring crime in Agana Heights and

through his beautification efforts in his village.

Mayor McDonald serves as a unifying force within the community, spearheading numerous initiatives, services, and events that foster cohesion and progress. His impact extends beyond the confines of Agana Heights, as evidenced by the 19-year tenure as president of the Association of Pacific Island Local Government.

He attributes his accomplishments to the enduring influence of his late father, Charles McDonald. Beyond his civic duties, Mayor McDonald takes great pride in his role as a devoted father and a cherished grandfather.

It is with genuine appreciation that I express my gratitude to Mayor McDonald for his steadfast dedication to the people of Guam and the beautiful village of Agana Heights.

As he embarks upon his final term, I extend my sincerest wishes for continued success and blessings. I am confident his legacy will endure as a source of inspiration for generations to come.

CELEBRATING THE ENGINEERS OF TOMORROW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the engineers of tomorrow coming from our very own Frederick Douglass Elementary School in Wilson County.

Under the guidance of Ms. Katherine Taylor, the school's media specialist, these talented students are learning to code, building LEGO robots, and completing challenges using visual arts and technology. All the hard work has paid off, as they won first place in Best Robotics Design and Overall Champion in the multicounty FIRST LEGO League Challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. Taylor for using technology to prepare the next generation of leaders and I thank the Wilson County Schools for investing in North Carolina's future.

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GREENE COUNTY ALL-STARS WIN EASTERN ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the young team of the Greene County all-star basketball program. These promising basketball stars of tomorrow just won the 2024 Eastern Athletic Conference Championship in the 10-12 age co-ed group. Greene County defeated Currituck County in a 55-45 victory.

Mr. Speaker, recreation sports are an excellent way to expose young athletes to the fundamentals of the game. These young basketball players experienced the wonders of competition, tested their skills and teamwork, and came out on top.

Hats off to the players, Coach Barry, and Coach LaVette for a fantastic sea-

son. Congratulations to our recreation departments across eastern North Carolina for making friendly competitions like this a reality. I particularly give a big shout-out to the Greene County Recreation Department and to the recreation director, Mike Anderson, for hosting this year's tournament.

COMMENDING IVELISSE DIAZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a Latina, a music prodigy, a cultural worker, a mother, and a constituent: La Bombera de Corazon, Ivelisse Diaz.

Born and raised in Humboldt Park to a Puerto Rican family, Ivelisse found her calling in life at the age of 5 when she started studying the traditional Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba.

Over her 24-year career, audiences in Seattle, California, Detroit, Puerto Rico, New York, Mexico, and Ghana have been moved, enthralled, and educated by Ivelisse's artistry and passion.

A trailblazer in so many ways, she is the recipient of the prestigious 2019 3Arts Award for her contribution to the arts.

La Bombera has gone on to ensure the preservation of Bomba by founding La Escuelita Bombera de Corazon, where she shares her knowledge of the history, the culture, and music of Afro-Indigenous culture.

On behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District, it is my honor to commend Ivelisse Diaz for her work preserving culture and passing the torch to the next generation of Bomberas.

Mr. Speaker, I thank and congratulate Ivelisse.

COMMENDING DIANA MARTINEZ

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Diana Martinez, a powerful Latina voice for our art, culture, and community in Illinois' Third District.

The proud daughter of a Salvadoran immigrant single mother, Diana demonstrated an early passion for creativity and the arts.

A Glen Ellyn native, she started her young career by participating in the Park District's theater programs and then nurtured her love for theater at Glenbard West High School and the University of Illinois.

In her current leadership role directing the McAninch Arts Center, Diana curates culturally impactful art experiences in DuPage County, including bringing major exhibits to our region featuring renowned paintings from legends like Frida Kahlo and Andy Warhol.

As an active and engaged neighbor, Diana seeks to protect and preserve her community's cultural and historic character through her work with Protect Glen Ellyn and Save Main.

For her dedication to art as a powerful means of building community, on