

When a Walgreens leaves a neighborhood, they disrupt the entire community, and they take with them baby formula, diapers, asthma inhalers, life-saving medications, and, of course, jobs. These closures are not arbitrary, and they are not innocent. They are life-threatening acts of racial and economic discrimination.

That is why I joined with Senator MARKEY and Senator WARREN to demand answers from Walgreens' CEO. Why was there no community input, no adequate notice to customers, and no transition resources to prevent gaps in healthcare?

Shame on you, Walgreens. Having a website with talking points about health equity and underserved communities is not enough. Walgreens is a multibillion-dollar corporation that needs to put their money where their mouth is and stop divesting from Black and Brown communities.

#### ONGOING HOSTAGE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SELF). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lead my colleagues in a Special Order hour. Tonight, I am honored to be joined by my colleagues to continue to shed light and bring broader awareness to the ongoing hostage crisis that plagues the Israeli and Jewish communities around the world.

On October 7, Hamas launched a horrific attack against Israeli civilians, resulting in the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. Recently, we marked 100 days since Hamas' gruesome attack. That is more than 100 days of inconceivable suffering for families who had their loved ones ripped away from them; more than 100 days consumed by nonstop panic, dread, and uncertainty. The pain, shock, and anger burning in the hearts of the Jewish people will never dull.

I know my own heart has felt like it was encased in lead ever since that fateful day, but it couldn't compare to the anguish and heartbreak of the families whose loved ones are still held captive by terrorists.

The last time my colleagues and I came together like this to highlight the hostages Hamas continues to cruelly hold hostage in Gaza, I fervently hoped the new year's arrival would make this advocacy no longer nec-

essary. Our work, advocacy, and pressure has been relentless that Hamas release the hostages and bring theirs and their families' nightmare to an end.

Tragically, however, the nightmare continues.

It is sadly fitting that, since marking 100 days since October 7, we also commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Jewish communities around the world gathered to honor the memory of the 6 million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust and the countless millions of others who perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

We look back because we can never forget, Mr. Speaker. We cannot avert our eyes from the horror that humanity is capable of inflicting. We look back not only to memorialize the victims, but to learn from the darkness of the past.

We also look back to not allow humanity to move forward without addressing the root causes that led to the horrific persecution of the Jewish people, which is the main reason we are here tonight—to dissuade those who forget or avert their eyes from the horrors that Hamas unleashed.

I recently returned to Israel and the region with our bipartisan, bicameral congressional delegation that was in the region on October 7, with the sole purpose of galvanizing the multinational efforts to secure the release of each and every last hostage.

In Israel, we met with families who are desperate for any shred of information which might result in their loved ones' release. We visited the kibbutz, Nir Oz, and saw the devastation Hamas wrought. We saw the remains of house after house that Hamas set on fire with the sole purpose of murdering the families inside. I saw firsthand Hamas' maniacal dedication to the destruction and eradication of Israel and the Jewish people.

My message is clear. We will not let Hamas succeed. The United States will continue to stand with Israel, and the Jewish people will live on as we have in the face of oppression and tyranny for millennia.

Tonight, my colleagues and I will speak about those who remain held captive in Gaza, show their beautiful faces, and remind all of us not to forget these victims who are still suffering under terrorist cruelty.

During our last Special Order, I had the honor to speak about the Bibas family: Parents Shiri and Yarden and their boys, Ariel and Kfir.

At 9 months old, Kfir was the youngest hostage taken. On January 18, Kfir turned 1. If Hamas never attacked Israel and never kidnapped women and children, he would have celebrated his first birthday with his family in his community. Instead, his family is left reeling, not knowing.

This cruelty is unimaginable. The Bibas family and sweet Kfir remain in my heart.

Tonight, I will be honoring Agam Berger, who was taken captive on Octo-

ber 7 shortly after calling her father telling him she heard shots fired. I had the opportunity to meet her father, Shlomi, recently.

Seeing the pain in his eyes was unbearable. I can tell in speaking with Shlomi that Agam comes from a very tight-knit family. She has three siblings, including her twin sister.

Mr. Speaker, as the mother of twins, I imagined the panic I would feel and, as a Jewish mother of three young adult children, I saw my own children when listening to his story.

Agam is a selfless young woman, volunteering with adults and children who have special needs and learning disabilities. She is the courageous young woman we all hope our children will grow up to be. Her family and friends proudly speak about her extraordinary musical talent.

You can see her here with her violin. Agam played the violin since she was in the fourth grade.

Mr. Speaker, the next time I am in Israel, I look forward to hearing Agam play her violin and listening to her immense talent, which her father played for us by video.

I want Shlomi and Agam's whole family to know that this Chamber stands with them, and we will continue to fight for Agam's release.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined by a number of Members tonight who all want to stand in solidarity with Israel and press for the release of the hostages.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LANDSMAN).

Mr. LANDSMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for doing this Special Order again tonight. This is the second, maybe third time she has done this to ensure that we do everything we can to tell these stories and to convince Hamas and those who fund Hamas to release every single hostage.

I am here to speak about Tsahi Idan. He was kidnapped on the 7th. Just after his daughter was killed, he was taken from his wife and his other child. They heard the sirens. They went into their safe room. Before long, a neighbor, who had been forced by Hamas, forced their way into the bomb shelter.

Imagine being in there with him. His teenage daughter throws herself against the door to protect herself and her family—her dad, her sister, her mom. She was immediately shot and killed.

He sees this, and then is taken, and he has been held hostage for 115 days.

I go back to Israel in a couple weeks, and it is entirely possible that I will get to spend time with him if Hamas releases the hostages.

Like him, I am a father. I have a teenage daughter. I hate this war. I want this war to end. I join all of us who have called for a cease-fire. We can't end this war until all of the hostages are home.

I know that others will stand up tonight and talk about the lives, stories of others being held hostage. Over a

hundred still remain in Gaza, including a 1-year-old. It cannot be overlooked by all those pushing for peace and a cease-fire that the quickest way to end this war is for Hamas to release these hostages, to get every single one of these hostages back home to their families and to their communities.

I hope that is something we can all agree on.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his relentless support and advocacy for the release of the hostages and his support for Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), our former majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. HOYER has been a stalwart supporter of the State of Israel for his entire tenure in the United States Congress.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I rise today, as I have before, to speak up for a brave American, Itay Chen. It has been 115 days since Hamas took Itay hostage while he was serving in the IDF. He is only 19 years of age. This Friday is his 20th birthday.

Itay may be young, but I know from his dad, Ruby, that he is already someone of great character, courage, conviction and compassion for others. Crucially, as his dad tells me, he is New York tough. I have no doubt that Itay has the strength, resilience, and determination to endure any hardship, no matter how grueling, no matter how long. That is the type of person Itay is, but he should not have to.

□ 1715

He shouldn't have to sit in a Hamas covert cave for 115 days awaiting rescue. He shouldn't have to wonder whether he will see home again. He shouldn't have to display the courage that I know he is showing this very moment.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, he ought to be at home right now watching tonight's NBA game and rooting for the Lakers, much to his dad's chagrin. He ought to be horsing around with his brothers, Roy and Alon. He ought to be celebrating his birthday with them and their parents, Ruby and Hagit.

Sadly, he is not. Behind every single face we see on these posters tonight are families and friends who have done everything they possibly can to bring their loved ones home. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Ruby has come to Capitol Hill almost every week since October 7.

Mr. Speaker, these families are doing everything they can, but their Congress is not. It has been 102 days since President Biden requested emergency supplemental aid for Israel, as well as Ukraine. For 102 days, this Congress has failed to deliver.

We are not powerless, but we are lacking in action. We are Members of Congress of the United States of America. We are privileged to be in a position where we can do more than say prayers and offer condolences, although that is important.

This Congress needs to take action to put Israel in the strongest position possible to bring these hostages home safely—every one of them—and to prevent this tragedy from ever occurring again.

For the sake of Itay, his family, and all of the other hostages and their families, we must act. We must show an ounce of the resolve they display every moment this nightmare continues.

Mr. Speaker, I will keep coming to this floor until we do. I will not stop until I see Itay in his family's embrace and all those hostages returned home safely.

Let us act as we can.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his stalwart leadership and support for the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) who is also the co-chair of the American Hostage Task Force.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share the story of Romi Gonen. She is still held hostage in Gaza.

She is a bright, young 23-year-old woman who on that fateful Saturday morning, 10:58 a.m. to be exact, was at a peace concert with her friends out in the desert, and then she found herself in an unimaginable circumstance fleeing in a car with her friends being shot at trying to escape Hamas terrorists.

The car was later found, and it was empty. Romi's incredible mother, Meirav, describes her daughter as a strong and happy type, and she was a former Scouts counselor. She was someone who loved being with children.

So as we stand here telling Romi's story from the floor of the House of Representatives, the concentration of democracy in the United States of America, we recognize that what happened on October 7 was an attack on all of us. It was an attack on free and civil society. It was an attack on humanity.

The fact that for 115 days Romi and hundreds of others of all ages and demographics and different ethnicities have been held hostage by those who do not seek to keep their own people safe is a reality that we have to reckon with because it is fear that they have sought to put into all of us.

I am calling for Romi's release along with all of the hostages release. I continue to support the Biden administration's efforts through diplomacy and through negotiation to return these individuals. I also am using the authority vested in me as a Member of the United States House of Representatives to call for the passage of aid, to call for the funding of aid so that we can see Romi reunite with her family and so that we can see this war come to an end.

We are heartbroken over the death and destruction that Hamas terrorists have brought on to the beautiful and incredible country of Israel and, frankly, to their own people.

No one was calling for war but Hamas on October 7.

We have to stand by democracy as the United States of America. We have to stand by individuals and people like Romi, her family, and the others.

It is a true and profound honor to be here this evening with my colleague, someone whom I admire so deeply, Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Like our majority leader emeritus, STENY HOYER, I will continue to come to this floor to advocate, to push, and to fight for the return of Romi and the far too many others who continue to be held hostage by Hamas terrorists.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her incredible support, leadership, advocacy, and poignancy in which she has been a supporter of the State of Israel in her hour of need.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT), who is the fellow co-chair of the bipartisan Latino-Jewish Caucus.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding to me.

As co-chair of the bipartisan Latino-Jewish Caucus, I rise today to tell an important story. There are many hostages. Over 100 hostages have been held for 115 days from all walks of life. Children, a 1-year-old child, seniors, women, and family members are being held hostage. I rise today to tell the story of a 34-year-old Israeli-Colombian hostage by the name of Elkana Bohbot, whose family I met this past December.

Elkana is not just an Israeli-Colombian. He is the beloved sibling of Jacob and Uriel Bohbot, the loving husband of Geraldyn Bohbot, and the dad of a 3-year-old.

Before October 7, Elkana had just opened up an ice cream shop in Tel Aviv and was looking forward to taking his 3-year-old son there for the first time.

Just imagine that, Mr. Speaker: a dad opening up an ice cream store and just waiting to see how his 3-year-old son will react when he first tastes that chocolate, that vanilla, or that strawberry ice cream.

I think we could identify with the magic of that moment. Yet now, every passing day for Elkana and his family are a waking nightmare. The last time Elkana's family saw him was in a Hamas video that was taken on October 7 alongside other hostages, and, in it, Elkana was severely injured.

Elkana has been forced to survive each passing day in the depths of Hamas tunnels without ventilation or fresh air fighting through asthma attacks because he is asthmatic without his medication.

At 115 days, Mr. Speaker, Elkana's life is hanging in the balance. Every day is a day of hope for all of us, and we will not give up on our actions to bring Elkana Bohbot home, as well as the other hostages.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

New York—where I am originally from—for his incredible leadership and work to bring the Hispanic and Jewish communities together so that we can continue to fight oppression against both of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING). She is someone who has become a dear friend of mine. She sits on the Foreign Affairs Committee and has been a national Jewish community leader.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend, Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and all she has done in this time of such tragedy for the Jewish people.

Mr. Speaker, on October 7, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel by land, air, and sea. They slaughtered over 1,200 innocent civilians, brutalized and raped women and girls, and took more than 240 hostages, including infants, children, the elderly, and even Holocaust survivors.

After long negotiations, many of those hostages were released with devastating trauma, weight loss, and emotional and physical injuries. That is why I am so worried about the remaining hostages.

It has been over 100 days of mourning, of pain, and uncertainty. For more than 100 days these people have been trapped in despicable underground tunnels with no fresh air, no sunlight, little water, little food, no comforts, and certainly no medical care.

Knowing all this is simply unbearable for the hostage families. I have been meeting with the families of the hostages for months, and their stories have been heartbreaking. Their stories have haunted all of us.

Today, I want to share the story of Carmel Gat and her family. Carmel Gat is a 39-year-old occupational therapist who lived in Tel Aviv. She was visiting her parents at Kibbutz Be'eri when Hamas attacked. First, they killed her mother, Kinneret. Then they grabbed Carmel and carted her away. Next, her brother, Alon; her sister-in-law, Yarden; and their 3-year-old daughter, Geffen, were all grabbed by Hamas and thrown into a vehicle.

Just before the vehicle crossed into Gaza, Alon and Yarden, with Geffen in her arms, jumped out of the vehicle and decided to run to safety. Yarden realized that her husband could run faster than she. She said to her husband: You take Geffen, because you can escape.

She sacrificed herself, and Yarden was taken hostage. Thankfully, during the first round of hostage releases, Yarden was released. I watched her reunion with her family with real joy.

Yet, the joy was tempered because Carmel was not released. She was not released because she is not a mother. She has now been held captive for nearly 4 months. Before her capture, Carmel was planning on starting her master's degree studies in October. She is a lover of music and of traveling. She is

someone who meets new people wherever she goes.

Carmel is a daughter, a sister, an aunt, and a friend to so many. My heart breaks for her family and her loved ones who do not know where she is, whether she is safe or whether she has been beaten or violated. As a beautiful young woman she is certainly at risk, and I am deeply concerned for Carmel's safety.

I am deeply concerned for all the women who are being held hostage by Hamas because we have seen more and more reports of what Hamas did to women and girls on October 7. They brutalized women. They raped them, they beat them, and they mutilated them. We have heard from those who were released that we need to get those women released as soon as possible because Hamas uses sexual violence as a weapon of war.

We must bring Carmel and every hostage home. I will keep using my voice in Congress to call for their safe return and to demand that the International Red Cross be allowed to visit the hostages in Gaza, administer aid to all of them, and report on their condition. We must hold Hamas accountable for their war crimes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her powerful words and for her leadership as the co-chair of the bipartisan task force to combat anti-Semitism in Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) who is a member of the Black-Jewish Caucus in Congress and a leader in the Fort Worth area in his district in bringing the Black and Jewish communities together.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, say to my dear friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), that I just really admire her perseverance in making sure this stays in the forefront.

It is important that we continue to talk about this because this atrocity that took place on October 7 can't be forgotten. One of the most important and critical pieces of what happened on October 7 that can't be forgotten is, obviously, the hostages that have been taken captive.

□ 1730

It has been 4 months since twin brothers Ziv and Gali Berman were brutally taken from their home to be held in Gaza.

Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly 4 months, and as a dad, I cannot imagine the pain and anguish that Ziv and Gali's mother, father, and their loved ones feel each day when they wake up knowing that those twin boys aren't at home.

I say twin boys, but they are both 26 years old. We all remember what it was like when you were 26 years old because you are still really in the infancy of your adulthood. You want to go and hang out with friends. You want to go

to concerts, go out and eat, celebrate momentous occasions with your close friends and family.

Sadly, they are not able to do that because their lives were shattered and their family's lives were shattered when they were taken hostage.

I know that this particular subject about what happened, about the horrendous tragedy that happened on October 7 has been divisive for this country, but I will say that regardless of how you feel about what is happening, we should all be able to come together and say enough is enough. All of the hostages need to be returned now. All of the hostages need to be returned today, regardless of how you feel.

That is something that each and every one of us should be able to come together to say and be resolute about that loved ones need to be reunited with their families.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida, my dear friend, for putting this together. I am going to keep talking about this. I hope each and every Member of Congress, regardless if you are in the progressive caucus, the New Dems, if you are a Republican, or conservative, whatever it may happen to be that we continue to talk about this.

I am going to because it is important. We cannot stop until these 26-year-old twins are home, and each and every person that was taken hostage on October 7 are returned to their families.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his compassion and his leadership, and for helping us to keep the plight of these hostages in the public eye. As a mother of 24-year-old twins, I know exactly what he means in the way he described that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LOIS FRANKEL), who has been a mentor and friend of mine for literally my entire adult life.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman, Representative WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I make these remarks with a very heavy heart. As we have heard today, we mark 115 days since the darkest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

On October 7, Hamas terrorists attacked Israel and mercilessly took the lives of 1,200 people. They tortured, they maimed, they raped people, and seized over 200 hostages.

Among the hostages, as you look at the photograph behind me, are Daniela Gilboa and Agam Berger, two vibrant young women, 19 and 20 years old, respectively. Agam, a skilled violinist since fourth grade, and Daniela, a singer with a captivating voice. Teenagers full of life with dreams and aspirations, and they have been held captive almost 4 months, most likely in the dreadful underground tunnels in Gaza where air

and food is scarce and abuse is abundant.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with the parents of Agam and Daniela. Their hearts are heavy, burdened by a living nightmare and the constant terror of the exploitation they dread their daughters are experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, over 100 hostages, including Daniela and Agam, remain separated from their loved ones and it is terrifying to even think of the fear, the brutality, and the perverse mistreatment they are experiencing every single day. It has been our solemn responsibility to share their stories and it is even a greater responsibility to bring them home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership in highlighting these two young women, especially given her role as the chair of the Democratic Women's Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER), the distinguished member of the Ways and Means and Foreign Affairs Committees, and a leader in the Jewish community in his home district.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 116 days since the attack, with more than 130 hostages, including six Americans, who are still not home.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues to call for the immediate, unconditional release of the more than 130 hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza.

Among them is an American citizen with deep connections to my district north of Chicago, Hersh Goldberg-Polin.

Hersh was last seen on October 7, kidnapped, wounded, and being taken at gunpoint to Gaza. His left arm had been severed just below the elbow, blown off by a grenade thrown into a bus stop where Hersh had sought refuge with approximately 30 others fleeing the carnage at the Re'im music festival.

Most in the shelter were murdered. Hersh, bloodied and dazed, was kidnapped. Hersh is the son of Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg, both originally from Chicago. Hersh has family and friends across my district. Hersh's aunt, Abby Polin, is a dear, personal friend of more than 30 years. His cousins went to school with my kids. His grandmother, Leah, has been an inspiration and a pillar of strength.

I join all of Hersh's family and friends in praying with all my heart and with all my might for Hersh's safety, for his health, and for his safe return.

Hersh, a vibrant 23-year-old, should be home with his parents and his two sisters, planning for his future. He should be traveling on a planned trip he had that was scheduled to leave last month.

In fact, El Al Airlines has held his reserved seat, praying for his return.

We must do everything we can to bring pressure on Hamas to release

Hersh and all the other hostages. We need the U.N. and the International Community of the Red Cross to demand Hamas immediately provide access to the hostages and ensure their unconditional release.

We need Qatar and Egypt and others to do more, to do whatever is necessary to bring the hostages home. I refuse to let the hostages be forgotten.

Tonight, with all my colleagues here, we stand on this House floor imploring Congress to do more, to do everything we can to work to save the hostages. To Hersh's parents, Rachel and Jon, to the parents, grandparents, kids, brothers, sisters, the loved ones of every hostage, know we stand with you. We feel your pain. We hear your pleas. We share your hope. Bring them home. Bring them home now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his relentless advocacy and for his partnership in continuing to help make sure we can keep a spotlight on the plight of these hostages who have been kept in captivity for 115 days now.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. SCHRIER), a dear friend and the first pediatrician ever elected to the United States Congress.

Ms. SCHRIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for her incredible leadership at this very hard time.

Mr. Speaker, on October 7, we witnessed the most horrific, gruesome, terrifying attack on Israel in its history.

Thousands of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and specifically targeted innocent civilians, including women and children. Twelve hundred Israelis were murdered, and women were specifically and systematically brutalized.

Now, 115 days later, 132 hostages are still being held by Hamas. Officials believe 18 have died. The others remain in horrific conditions and have not received required medical checks from the International Red Cross.

I have met with the families of several hostages, and they need our voices and our advocacy to help bring their loved ones home.

Here are two: Naama Levy is 19 years old and is active in a peace movement bringing young Israeli and Palestinian people together seeking peace. Doron Steinbrecher is 30 years old, a veterinary nurse who was kidnapped from her home.

Just imagine if your daughter, sister, or partner were held hostage by Hamas terrorists for 115 days and the torture of not knowing whether they are alive.

Consider for a moment what it must be like to live a nightmare every day, wondering what horrors they might be enduring. Released hostages have reported sexual violence and rape, drugging, beating, branding, and deplorable conditions. Hamas has not allowed the ICRC to assess the condition of the hostages and has not provided proof of life.

We in Congress, we in this country, need to do everything in our power to keep these hostages and their families in our hearts to tell their stories and to bring them home now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and appreciate her participation tonight in continuing to shine a spotlight on the captivity of the hostages.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN), a dear friend who has also been relentless in continuing our efforts to make sure that we can apply the pressure necessary to bring the hostages home.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for scheduling this Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I am almost without the ability to speak because of the horrors that have occurred on October 7 with the killing of people and the taking of 240 hostages, 110 believed to be alive and still in captivity by Hamas, is unthinkable.

Unthinkable to normal human beings, but thinkable to Hamas whose purpose in their charter and statements that they have made as recently as a week ago from leaders is to erase Israel from the map and to kill all Jews.

The war is horrific, and I have many people who I represent who have been supporters of mine for years who are upset that I have not called for a cease-fire. I share with them grief at looking at the rubble in Gaza and the people killed. The children that have been killed. The children that have lost their limbs. The children who will never recover from this trauma, but as Bret Stephens said so well in *The New York Times* this past week: Every single death is the result of Hamas because they broke the cease-fire on October 7. This is the fifth time they have gone to war on Israel and they continue to have the same purpose—to eradicate Israel and to kill all Jews. That is Israel's neighbor.

Bob Dylan one time wrote a song called "Neighborhood Bully," Israel, but Bob said you would be a bully too if those were your neighbors. That is what they have got right now.

Mr. Speaker, Noa Argamani was put on a motorcycle and taken out of Israel. She reached up and said, "Please, don't kill me." She is still there.

Mr. Polin, who Representative SCHNEIDER talked about, lost his arm. Who knows what condition he is in now if he is alive?

□ 1745

There are efforts to get the children, the elderly, and the women released with a 6-week or 2-month cease-fire that the United States has participated in, and President Biden is largely responsible for, working with Qatar and Egypt. Hopefully, they will be successful. They should also include the injured, and they should also include the

people who have been killed so they can be reunited with their families and buried.

These are horrific conditions, unfortunately, that are transpiring.

I think it was President Trump who first started referring to the people who tried to take this Chamber, who came in here saying, “Hang Mike Pence,” “Hang Nancy Pelosi,” and take Members of this Congress as hostages or beat them. One of our Members in particular has also referred to those who have gone to prison, criminals, as hostages. It is a disgrace to these people whose pictures are behind me who are hostages. Those people aren’t, and anybody who says it should be ashamed.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. COHEN particularly for highlighting the abomination of an idea that a terrorist entity should be allowed to live on the precipice of a nation and remain a threat, as Hamas continues to do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GOLDMAN), a new Member who has been a stalwart leader ever since October 7 and beyond, and we appreciate his participation tonight.

Mr. GOLDMAN of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Florida, who has been such a terrific mentor and model for so many of us. I also thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing us this Special Order hour to highlight the horrific conditions, 116 days in captivity, that more than 100 hostages are enduring.

I stand before you today to highlight the tragic case of Noa Argamani, a 25-year-old Israeli woman who many know from a video posted by Hamas on October 7 of her being abducted by terrorists and taken away on a motorcycle, screaming “Don’t kill me.”

This is a still photo from that video. You can see the absolute terror in her eyes as she is being kidnapped into Gaza by armed terrorists who had brutally murdered, raped, and tortured her friends and fellow Israeli citizens.

This is a photo of her before October 7—a beautiful smile, full of life, hope, and a bright future ahead.

Noa should have been released with the other female civilians—one of the categories that Hamas had agreed to release—who were released during the temporary cease-fire 2 months ago, but she was not, and we know why. Hamas broke the agreement with Israel because they did not want Noa to describe the rape and violence that she endured in captivity. We know from other hostages that were released at that time that the same awful sexual violence that occurred with horrific brutality on October 7 continued in the dark, damp, cramped tunnels in Gaza, and that was 61 days ago. Two months.

At least as of 16 days ago, we know that Noa is still alive. We know because Hamas released a psychological terror video of her sitting with two other hostages, but we know nothing

about her condition because Hamas refuses to allow the International Red Cross into Gaza to check on the medical conditions of the hostages.

That is required by international law, but somehow for many the fact that Hamas is a designated terrorist organization that has violated countless international laws—and cease-fires, I might add—seems to give them a pass at adhering to international law about medical checks and wellness visits.

Since when do we allow terrorist organizations to dictate how international law operates?

What makes this even worse is that we haven’t heard anything from Qatar nor Egypt nor Turkiye nor any other country with influence on Hamas who push and prod them to allow international medical professionals to access the innocent civilian hostages, even though we know from those who have come out that their conditions violate a host of international laws.

I have met with families and mothers of some of the young women who remain in captivity. They, of course, are devastated, worried, and distraught about their daughters. Do you know what keeps them up at night? They assume that their daughters are pregnant with babies of Hamas terrorists. Imagine that being a mother’s final thought before she falls asleep and her first thought when she wakes up.

Noa’s mother, Liora, has an additional heartbreaking cause for urgency. You see, Liora is currently battling terminal stage 4 brain cancer. She is desperately hoping that she can see her daughter before she passes away.

This tragic story hits me especially hard because my father died of brain cancer 34 years ago, when I was just 13 years old. I remember to this day the last time I got to see my father before he died. I still feel lucky to have been able to say good-bye.

Noa deserves to have that same memory, too, and Liora deserves to die with the peace of mind that Noa is out of captivity and hopefully on her way to healing.

This is an excerpt from a letter that Liora Argamani, Noa’s mother, sent to President Biden. She wrote, I am terminally ill with stage 4 brain cancer. All that is running through my mind before I part ways with my family forever is the chance to hug my daughter, my only child, one last time.

We cannot wait any longer. Noa will soon lose her mother. While every single additional day that Noa spends in captivity could be her last, it could also be her mother’s last.

The international community must pressure Hamas to immediately cease their illegal kidnapping of more than 100 innocent civilians who are being tortured, raped, and horrifically treated.

Israel has reportedly agreed with the United States, Qatar, and Egypt to make significant concessions to Hamas

to release the hostages. It is now incumbent upon Hamas to agree to do so, and for that to happen, the international community must apply pressure on Hamas to agree to the proposed cease-fire and release the hostages.

We must bring them home. We must bring them all home now. Time is running out.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York. That is a searing account of the absolute importance that there is in ensuring that we bring the hostages home immediately to their families.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and thankful to be joined by a woman who makes our Special Order hour bipartisan, although I know there are far more Members on both sides of the aisle who share our sentiments. She is a woman who has become a dear friend, especially because of the experiences we have shared together unexpectedly over the last several months. The gentlewoman from Iowa and I were part of a bipartisan, bicameral delegation that was in the region on October 7, and returned at the end of December. She is a veteran of the United States Army of 24 years and an ophthalmologist. I appreciate her advocacy and passion about making sure that we bring these hostages home.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS).

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, on the morning of the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah on October 7, 2023, as Representative WASSERMAN SCHULTZ said, we happened to be in the Middle East at that time, when Hamas terrorists launched unimaginable and barbaric attacks on Israeli citizens by air, land, and sea. These attacks resulted in the death of over 1,300 Israeli citizens, including 30 Americans, and over 250 individuals were taken hostage.

Following these attacks, I introduced House Resolution 777 to condemn these horrendous attacks and demanded the immediate release of all hostages in Gaza. However, 4 months later, at least 130 hostages are still being held by Hamas, including American citizens.

Earlier this year, I was proud to join Senator JONI ERNST on a bipartisan and bicameral congressional delegation to Egypt, Israel, Qatar, and Bahrain to advocate for the American and Israeli citizens still held captive by Hamas. While in the region, we heard from family members, released hostages, and leaders in the region about the escalation of crimes committed by Hamas against women.

It was heartbreaking to meet with these members of the kibbutz Nir Oz community and family members of Judith Weinstein and Gad Haggai, American citizens who were killed by Hamas whose bodies still remain in Gaza. Additionally, we heard the frustrations and living nightmares of the families of Americans still held hostage: Edan Alexander, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Itay Chen, Keith Siegel, Omer Neutra, and

Sagui Dekel-Chen, and to hear of two children, one who had recently turned 1 and the other 4 years old, who are still being held in captivity.

While I am grateful for the 100 hostages who have been released so far, it is essential that the Biden administration do everything in their power to demand Hamas release the rest of the hostages. While Hamas released women, children, and grandparents, Israel was required to release three times as many not innocent civilians, convicted terrorists. Examples include charges of opening fire on Jewish civilians, stabbings, and arson.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida, Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for hosting this important Special Order, and I will continue calling for the safe return of all hostages held by Hamas and to deter the concerning rise of anti-Semitism in the United States.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her solidarity. I thank the Members, Jewish and non-Jewish, Democratic and Republican, for joining us tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I close by reminding the American public, the hostages that they heard about this evening have been held captive in Hamas' captivity for over 115 days. Hamas must end this crisis today by releasing the hostages and allowing them to be reunited with their families.

I hope every American understands that Israel is fighting to rescue her people and to protect her citizens from a terrorist organization that is dedicated to destroying the State of Israel and carrying out the October 7 attack against Israel and the Jewish people over and over again.

The United States will not let Hamas succeed. The Jewish people will not let Hamas succeed. Any people with a shred of humanity would not let Hamas succeed.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I in this Chamber will continue to stand with Israel and fight for the release of those held captive, of those being brutally abused and sexually violated. We will continue to make sure we shine our white-hot spotlights on the plight of these hostages until they are safely home with their families and until Hamas is eradicated as a threat on Israel's doorstep or to anyone worldwide.

"Am Yisrael Chai." "The people of Israel live." Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### DOES ANYONE SEE A MATH PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Madam Speaker, I thank you and Ms. WASSERMAN

SCHULTZ and the other Members who spoke for their words. Being from Scottsdale, you know, my community actually has family who have been devastated by what is going on in Israel.

Madam Speaker, have you ever had one of these moments where you are walking out here, and one of the reporters shoves their little recorder in your face, and it is not until the next day that you start to realize what you wish you would have said?

Last week, a young man stuck his microphone in my face and says, Aren't you tired of going to the floor every week and saying the exact same thing?

□ 1800

If that is true, I apologize to the poor team here who has to try to write down our words, to listen to this.

I don't think I am saying the exact same thing. It is the same theme because it is true. The problem is every week, it is getting worse, and we just do nothing.

We are going to walk through some of the numbers of what has happened in the last couple weeks, and maybe someone will actually hear the words instead of thinking I am giving the same speech that I was giving a year ago because the numbers are dramatically uglier.

If I don't talk too long, I am going to try to actually at the end here walk through some things that are positive, but it is just going to require this body to actually do something.

Just to sort of point out that I am no longer alone, I am now starting to finally see in some of the mainstream press—not just the financial press, not just the bond press—actual coverage.

Here is Robert Rubin, the former Treasury Secretary, under a Democrat President. The U.S. is in a terrible place fiscally. That is a Democrat. Here is the head of J.P. Morgan, Jamie Diamond: Driving toward a fiscal cliff.

Now, for those of you who are fans of "The Black Swan," "Antifragile," actually, I love both books. I am a little bit more of a George Gilder fan when it comes to economics. For anyone that knows who that is, you are a real geek.

He is basically saying—and my understanding is he is quite liberal. He is an economist who basically predicted the black swan, and then it happened.

He talks about fragility, which is something I have come here and talked about over and over, that with the scale of debt, the fragility we have created, he is basically saying: death spiral.

Anyone care? Are these just people you want to ignore because they are not giving you free rein to just keep borrowing and spending?

We are going to walk through some boards because that is sort of what we do here because I found when you are talking about things with 12 zeros, no one can picture them.

First off, to demonstrate how much uglier the numbers are today than they were even way back when, like last De-

cember, does anyone remember the wayback machine a month ago?

Understand, CBO updated their numbers. The update was \$1 trillion additional borrowing on what was projected.

Our joint economic economists are working on some math right now, and I will show it over and over on the board.

If we don't see some substantial turnaround in tax receipts or the bending of healthcare spending, we may borrow \$3 trillion this year.

I am trying to find ways to get people to pay attention. If I tell you at the current borrowing rate, every 140 days we click off another trillion dollars of borrowing. A trillion dollars every 140 days. Is anyone hearing this?

Back to our wayback machine. This is a board I produced for a floor speech last month. I think I did this in December.

Anyone that is really smart that is able to read really small type, can you catch the mistake? We were basically saying, hey, we are going to head toward the deficit.

All discretionary, military included, is \$1.7 trillion, and then you add up everything else with it, and we are going to have to borrow this wedge.

Well, I will tell you right now that our prediction is somewhere around \$2.6 trillion to \$3 trillion of borrowing of our budget that we get to vote on.

Remember, all this over here, as a Member of Congress, you don't vote on. It is Medicare. It is Medicaid. It is Indian Health Service. Actually, Indian Health Service is actually an appropriated items. It is the things that are on formula. The vast majority of our spending is on autopilot.

Process this: Every dime a Member of Congress votes on is borrowed. Plus, congratulations. It looks like every dime we vote on is borrowed plus another trillion dollars, so let's just assign it to something.

\$1 trillion in Medicare is going to be borrowed, and we don't vote on it. Next time you have someone say, well, just balance the budget. We are going to balance it right away.

You can wipe out every dime in the military. You can wipe out every dime of what you think of as government—so there is no State Department, there is no Supreme Court, and there is no Congress. Maybe we would be better off. There is nothing. It is all gone.

You still have to borrow another \$1 trillion to cover what we call the earned entitlements. The wheels have come off, and we will do everything we can to avoid telling you the truth.

CBO, to their credit, basically a couple weeks ago got up and said, hey, we screwed up. We were telling you we were going to borrow \$1.6 trillion, \$1.8 trillion, maybe on the outlier, but it turns out tax receipts came in \$477 billion lower than what we are projecting.

It turns out that outlays, mostly healthcare costs, are up 9 percent, \$564