

last couple of months and we are going to do this next week is not going to solve the problem. It's only going to make it worse.

□ 1430

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. SCHWARTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. SCHWARTZ addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

H.R. 104

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday this country saw a marvelous event that occurs every 4 years, which is the inauguration of a President of the United States who was elected by the people and who assumes power because of the vote of the people. That is the essence of democracy and what America is foremost at, not revolutions, not juntas, but elections, the rule of law and not terror or violence.

Just as we celebrated that great event with more people than ever here in Washington to witness it, it is important that we reiterate to the American public that we are a Nation of laws and not a Nation of men. It is for that reason that I joined with the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, JOHN CONYERS, as a cosponsor of H.R. 104, which seeks to set up an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration policies for having a claim of unreviewable war powers, for actions they took or might have taken that did damage to the United States Constitution and to the laws of this Nation. No person is above the law, no person should be considered above the law, and a commission of this sort is important to fulfill the duties of the Congress, which is an independent and separate branch of government, and to see if laws were violated.

There are many Americans that feel that there were violations of the law by the administration in the process of leading us to the war in Iraq and information that was given or not given to this Congress, that the PATRIOT Act and uses of that PATRIOT Act in investigating Americans and listening to phone conversations or interrupting other messages without securing subpoenas or going through the proper due process also violated the law.

In the Judiciary Committee we looked at several of these violations. We tried to subpoena individuals such as Harriett Myers and Karl Rove, and they rejected compliance with subpoenas. This is another area where we need to go forward, and we need to see that when a congressional committee issues subpoenas, that they are responded to by the executive and not under some blanket executive power.

Harriett Myers, a private citizen, refused to comply. Karl Rove also refused to comply.

Torture, as used and defined in international law, was used by this administration. Attorney General Designate Eric Holder stated that water boarding is torture; and the former Vice President Dick Cheney said that they used water boarding and seemed somewhat boastful of it.

Again, if we use these type of tactics of torture of people detained without due process in particular, but with due process or not, we subject our own soldiers to such treatment, and that is a danger and a violation of the international laws that we should not allow.

It is important that we look into the activities of the Justice Department that were politicized during the days of Alberto Gonzales and others. Monica Goodling told us in the Judiciary Committee, after being given a grant of immunity, that partisan associations of candidates played a role in the hiring of career officials in Justice. And the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General and Office of Professional Responsibility issued a joint report, concluding the Bush Department of Justice officials violated departmental rules and Federal law in considering political affiliations for the hiring of career attorneys.

There are many areas for investigations. I hope that the Congress will pass H.R. 104, and allow us to look into these and guarantee the American public that we are a Nation of laws and not a Nation of men, and, regardless of the position you hold, you are held to standards.

Just behind me there are words carved into the desk of the Clerk, and they include "justice." There is liberty, there is justice, there is tolerance, and other virtues. Justice is the highest.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IRAQI CHRISTIANS FACE EXTINCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, "The Christian owner of a car repair shop was killed execution-style in Mosul, police said Saturday, raising concerns about

the possibility of new attacks against religious minorities in the northern city." This chilling excerpt was taken from a recent AP story, which went on to say that the attack "followed a pattern of violence and intimidation that sent thousands of Christians fleeing from their homes in Mosul this fall."

This is not the first time that we have seen targeted killings. We need to look no farther than the 2008 kidnap and murder of Archbishop Rahho of Mosul, an Assyrian Christian of the Chaldean Church, or Youssef Adel, an Assyrian Christian priest who was fatally shot in a drive-by attack in April of 2008.

These high-profile killings are indicative of wider-scale persecution and fear experienced by this suffering community. The numbers tell the story.

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Iraqi's Christian population has fallen from as many as 1.4 million in 2003 to between 500,000 and 700,000 at present. The report says that, "While Christians and other religious minorities represent only approximately 3 percent of the pre-2003 Iraqi population, they constitute approximately 15 percent and 20 percent of registered Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria respectively, and Christians account for 35 and 64 percent, respectively, of all registered Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and Turkey." What we are witnessing here is the tragic extinction of an age-old faith community.

The patriarch Abraham came from a city in Iraq called Ur. Isaac's bride, Rebekah, came from northwest Iraq. Jacob spent 20 years in Iraq, and his sons, the 12 tribes of Israel, were born in northwest Iraq. A remarkable spiritual revival as told in the book of Jonah occurred in Nineveh. And the events of the book of Esther took place in Iraq, as did the accounts of Daniel in the Lion's Den.

For months, I unsuccessfully urged the Bush administration to develop a comprehensive policy to address the unique plight of Iraq's struggling ethno-religious minorities, specifically the Christian community. We have pressed for one person in the embassy to work on these. The Religious Freedom Commission has also asked for things like this, but now we are seeing that the creation and filling of this position must be, must be, among Secretary Clinton's first priorities.

In July of 2008, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration & Refugee Services said this about the minority religious community: "These groups, whose home has been what is now Iraq for many centuries, are literally being obliterated, not because they are fleeing generalized violence but because they are specifically and viciously victimized by Islamic extremists and, in some cases, common criminals."

These minority communities face marginalization or even extinction. U.S. policy must reflect the unique political and security reality of these minority communities. I urge Members of