

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in continued support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation of Ukraine and stand with the people of that country for their liberty and full human rights.

The first objective of international efforts to calm Ukraine must be the overriding goal of no more bloodshed. The world community of nations must step up forcefully to affirm Ukraine's new government, and not just for the sake of tomorrow.

Morally, nations that had supported Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin or were bystanders to communism and Naziism that slaughtered millions and millions of people inside those borders owe Ukraine an historical debt. No place on Earth suffered more. As the demonstrators on Maidan have proven, tyrants and corrupt officials couldn't kill Ukraine's people's longing for freedom and liberty.

This is Ukraine's moment, and it is a breakpoint in liberty's march that history will judge.

Where do we go from here? Our path must be diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and military. Diplomatically, the international community must affirm Ukraine and her interim government. I commend President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their leadership. Yesterday, the OSCE announced that 18 participating countries will send 35 unarmed military observers to Ukraine. Let them reveal the truth.

Countries with large Ukrainian diaspora, like our country, along with Poland, Canada, Argentina, Italy, Portugal, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Kazakhstan, should seek constructive means to help.

Further, the world community and OSCE should assure sufficient election monitors are recruited and trained for the upcoming elections in Ukraine on May 25. Then, economically, the world community should proceed to work through Ukraine's financial challenges. However, any financial assistance to Ukraine should be contingent on repayment, and Ukraine's new government must clearly define performance standards and lay out a reasonable plan to repay any foreign aid.

Transitioning from a kleptocracy to a functioning state will require technical assistance, management expertise, and loaned personnel from governments throughout the world. In addition, the United States and other nations should impose targeted financial, economic, trade, and travel sanctions on Russian assets on a timetable that demonstrates our resolve.

The United Nations and global supporters of Ukraine must respond if Ukraine requests humanitarian relief to those places most in need. As long as Russian aggression persists, its participation in the G8 should be suspended. And, finally, militarily, the parties to the 1994 Budapest accords should enforce that agreement.

In addition, Ukraine exists in an inferior military posture to its more pow-

erful neighboring states. To remedy this shortcoming, NATO should create a new category of provisional membership for nations whose military has fought alongside NATO member forces in the war on terrorism. Ukraine has.

As a true borderland region, Ukraine is positioned to be truly a bridge between East, West, North, and South in that most important region of Central Europe. The free world must walk with Ukraine as she moves toward a more free and democratic future. There is no turning back.

SEVENTH CENTURY RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, much ink has been used regarding Secretary of State John Kerry's comments this weekend characterizing Vladimir Putin's outrageous incursion into Ukraine as a "19th century act in the 21st century." But if we are looking through the lens of history, it is also worth noting what a small community of Syrian Christians has been forced to endure.

Writing in National Review Online this week, stalwart religious freedom advocate Nina Shea authored a piece, headlined, "Syrian Jihadists Are Forcing Christians to Become Dhimmis Under Seventh-Century Rules." Shea notes:

The religious persecution in Syria deepened this week, as evidenced by a written ultimatum purportedly distributed by the rebel jihadist group ISIS, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, to Christians in the northern providence capital of Raqqa.

Rejecting conversion to Islam or death, some 20 Christian leaders of that city held firm in their faith and submitted to the Islamists' demands to live by as dhimmis.

Shea continued to explain the implications of this status. She said:

Under this arrangement, in exchange for their lives and the ability to worship as Christians, they must abide by purported seventh-century rules of Caliph Umar.

According to the Raqqa ultimatum, these include bans on renovating and rebuilding churches and monasteries, many of which need repair because they have been shelled and blown up over the past 3 years, and bans against the public display of crosses and Christian symbols and the ringing of bells.

She went on to say:

They are forbidden from reading Scripture indoors loud enough for Muslims outside to hear, and the practice of their faith must be confined within the walls of their remaining churches, not exercised publicly at, for example, weddings or funerals.

Many have remarked that Raqqa was once one of Syria's most liberal cities. Its Christian community numbered about 3,000 before the conflict. They have since been devastated by violence and migration. Their exact number today is unknown.

This month marks the anniversary of the uprising which eventually spiraled into the war and violence which has

terrorized Syria for 3 years now. Muslims and Christians alike have experienced horrific violence. But, as Shea quotes:

The Christians who remain in Raqqa must now bear the additional suffering of dhimmitude.

Their plight, while more stark, given the official nature of their subjugation, parallels, in many ways, that of other besieged religious minorities, specifically Christians throughout the broader Middle East.

The latest outrage finally garnered a statement from the Department of State's spokesman. But a statement provides little solace to a people facing death, forced conversion, or, in the case of these Christian leaders who refused to abandon their faith, an exacting toll to abide by the dictates of their conscience.

Such an outrage demands a response from policymakers and faith leaders alike. I have joined with Congresswoman ANNA ESHOO and others in sending a letter to Secretary Kerry urging the Department of State to cooperate with a Syria Study Group to be facilitated by the Washington, D.C.-based Atlantic Council. The study group would be charged with producing a report as quickly as possible that would help the administration and Congress identify and implement ways for bringing this crisis to a close in a manner fully consistent with the interests and the political transition objectives of the United States. Surely the protection of ancient faith communities like Syria's Christian community is one such interest.

Meanwhile, I believe that it is critical for the faith community in the West, specifically the Church in America, to find its voice on behalf of our marginalized and persecuted brothers and sisters abroad, be they in Syria, Egypt, or Iraq. I meet regularly with representatives of these groups. They are desperate for help, or at least the solidarity, and they cannot understand the seeming lack of urgency by their brethren here in America, and, frankly, nor can I.

HONORING DALLAS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, ALABAMA'S CLASS 4A STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS 2014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the Dallas County High School Hornets on winning the State of Alabama title in the class 4A State basketball championship on Saturday, March 1, 2014. On behalf of the Seventh Congressional District, I pay honor and tribute to the Hornets for their exemplary athleticism and teamwork, as well as the outstanding leadership of Head Coach Willie Moore and his coaching staff.

Dallas County High School's basketball championship victory capped off