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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GALLAGHER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 22, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE GALLAGHER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

FREE RAIIF BADAWI AND ALL PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE IN SAUDI ARABIA

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, June 17 will mark the fifth anniversary of the arrest of Raif Badawi, a human activist and writer who created the website "Free Saudi Liberals." He is a prisoner of conscience sentenced to 1,000 lashes, 10 years in prison, and a 10-year travel ban for exercising his fundamental right to freedom of expression.

He was convicted of violating Saudi Arabia's draconian information technology law and "insulting Islam."

Since his imprisonment in 2012, Raif's case has garnered international attention and outrage. For the courage he displayed as a free-speech advocate, he has won many awards, including the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Prize in 2014, the PEN Pinter International Writer of Courage Prize, and the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2015.

His writings were a breath of fresh air in a country that ranks 168 out of 180 in Reporters Without Borders 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

In January 2015, Raif received the first 50 of the 1,000 lashes ordered by the so-called court that sentenced him. Try to imagine what that means, what it would feel like to have someone whip you 50 times in a row, what it would do to your body, and how it would cut you up and make you bleed. The lashing was carried out in public in front of a mosque as men stood around and cheered. It was barbaric.

A week after the first session of flogging, a doctor advised prison authorities that Raif's wounds had not healed enough for him to undergo the second round of this brutal punishing. To date, the lashings have not continued, but they could resume at any time.

Last year, Raif had to resort to a hunger strike to get access to healthcare. It has been 5 years since he has seen his wife, Ensaf, and his three children. They are growing up, and he is missing it because he dared to write what he thought.

I am sorry to say that Raif is not an isolated case. Reporters Without Borders has identified another 10 journalists and citizen journalists detained in Saudi Arabia.

Waleed Abu al-Khair, a prominent human rights defender and Raif's lawyer, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for "harming the reputation of the

state by communicating with international organizations" and other supposed crimes, like "insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges" and "disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy."

Many other human rights defenders are in prison for doing things like setting up human rights organizations without permission and calling for protests. All of the founders of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association have been wrongfully put on trial or imprisoned.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that Saudi Arabia is an ally of the United States, but we also know that Saudi Arabia's human rights record is terrible. According to our own State Department, "The most important human rights problems include citizens' lack of ability and legal means to choose their government, restrictions on universal rights such as freedom of expression, including on the internet, association, movement, and religion, and pervasive gender discrimination and lack of equal rights that affect most aspects of women's lives."

That is not exactly a short list, Mr. Speaker. Yet the President of the United States just traveled to Saudi Arabia without saying a single word in public about human rights, without speaking up even once on behalf of all the people who are wasting away in jails because they chose to defend a client, advocate for minorities, or call for reform.

The President wants to buy cooperation in the fight against extremism with a \$110 billion arms deal, but Saudi Arabia will not achieve security or stability by repressing peaceful dissent. On the contrary, repression creates the conditions for extremism.

Haven't we learned that lesson by now?

Senator JOHN MCCAIN, a former prisoner of war, understands what the President does not. We in the United

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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