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## House of Representatives

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

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,  
December 11, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROGER W. MARSHALL 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. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

### 36TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EL MOZOTE MASSACRE

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, 36 years ago, nearly 1,000 men, women, and children were murdered by Salvadoran soldiers in El Mozote, El Salvador. It is considered one of the worst massacres in modern Latin American history.

On December 2, I traveled to El Mozote with a delegation led by the

Washington Office on Latin America. Four hours after leaving San Salvador, we arrived at El Mozote in the northern region of Morazan, near the border of Honduras.

Three decades ago, El Mozote included about 20 houses on open ground around a square. Facing the square was a church and, behind it, a small building known as the convent, used by the priest to change into his vestments when celebrating Mass. Nearby was a small schoolhouse.

Our delegation sat in the town square with survivors and victims of the massacre. We listened to their stories, shared prayers for their loss and suffering, toured the grounds where this atrocity took place, and visited memorials the community built to commemorate and preserve this tragic history. We also heard from lawyers from Cristosal, a U.S.-based NGO providing legal aid to the association of victims and survivors.

On December 10, 1981, the Salvadoran Army brigade based in San Miguel and the Atlacatl Battalion, an elite infantry unit based in San Salvador, arrived in El Mozote. Over the next 2 days, these troops methodically and viciously murdered the town's residents and those of nearby villages.

On the morning of December 11, troops assembled the people in the town square. They separated the men from the women and children and locked them in separate groups in the church, the convent, and various houses. According to eyewitness accounts, they then interrogated, tortured, and executed the men at several different sites.

Around noon, they began taking the women and girls in groups, separating them from their children and machine-gunning them after raping them. Many families were ordered to remain in their homes while soldiers set fire to their houses.

Over 140 of the children—some, mere infants—were jammed into the convent

next to the church. There, soldiers blocked the doors, aimed guns through the windows, and fired into the mass of children, murdering them all in cold blood. They then threw an incendiary bomb into the building, collapsing the roof and adobe walls.

Mr. Speaker, I walked with members of the community to the site where the children were murdered. A garden cultivated in their memory blooms on the site where they perished. A mural on the side of the church facing the garden depicts tiny angels ascending to Heaven.

Beneath the mural are plaques with the names and ages of the children killed so brutally. They range from zero to 16 years. Walking on such hallowed ground, I was deeply moved and outraged by the atrocity that took place there.

In October 1990, the Salvadoran courts opened an investigation into the El Mozote case, and in January 1992, the civil war ended with peace accords signed between the Salvadoran Government and FMLN guerrillas. In November 1992, the U.S. Truth Commission supervised exhumations of El Mozote remains by Argentine forensic experts, confirming that the stories told by the survivors were indeed true. Then everything was cut short when the Salvadoran Congress passed a sweeping amnesty law in 1993.

However, last year, in July 2016, the Salvadoran Supreme Court overturned the amnesty law as unconstitutional; and in October of 2016, a judge reopened the El Mozote case and began taking testimony, which continues today.

Now, there are many reasons why we in Congress should be engaged in the search for justice in the El Mozote case. First, in the postwar period, the U.S. has supported a strong and independent judiciary in El Salvador, capable of prosecuting corruption and human rights abuses. El Mozote is viewed as an exemplar case on whether this is possible to achieve.

□ 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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