

Peru's Congress to impeach Attorney General Pablo Sanchez in the midst of his office's investigation into allegations that the Presidential campaign of Keiko Fujimori received illegal contributions in 2011. The effort to remove Attorney General Sanchez strongly suggests a deliberate strategy to obstruct justice and to undermine the autonomy of the attorney general's office. This would represent a grave setback for hard-fought gains to reestablish an independent judiciary and the rule of law in Peru. It would have serious ramifications for U.S.-Peruvian relations.

Credible allegations of corruption must be thoroughly investigated, without prejudice to party or power, and with due process for the accused. I urge members of Peru's Congress to support those who are acting on behalf of the Peruvian people in the pursuit of truth and justice. Key to this is respect for the autonomy of the office of the attorney general and of the Constitutional Tribunal, institutions that are guarantors of human rights and the rule of law.

PRESS FREEDOM

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we are all too familiar with President Trump's "fake news" mantra, which he has repeatedly used to discredit unfavorable news reports and undermine the credibility of the media in our country.

This mantra and the accompanying threats to freedoms of speech and of the press have now spread far beyond our borders. Autocrats and dictators around the world are enthusiastically using the concept of fake news and the legitimacy granted to it by the President of the United States to further undermine and restrict press freedom and fact-based reporting on corruption, human rights, and other abuses in their own countries.

For example, in response to an Amnesty International report on thousands of military prison deaths in Syria, President Bashar al-Assad remarked, "You can forge anything these days, we are living in a fake news era." Similarly, in response to news reports on persecution of the Rohingya ethnic minority group in Myanmar, an officer in Myanmar's Rakhine state security ministry stated, "There is no such thing as Rohingya. It is fake news."

The list goes on and includes comments from autocratic leaders in the Philippines, Venezuela, Russia, China, and Turkey, among others, who have used the fake news mantra to legitimize harassment, arrests, and prosecutions of journalists.

Last week, the Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ, released its annual census of imprisoned journalists worldwide, which has hit an historical high of 262. The total does not include the many more journalists who were imprisoned for a period of time during the year before being released prior to the December 1 census. A CPJ statement

published with the report noted that: "Far from isolating repressive countries for their authoritarian behavior, the United States, in particular, has cozied up to strongmen such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Chinese President Xi Jinping. At the same time, President Donald Trump's nationalistic rhetoric, fixation on Islamic extremism, and insistence on labeling critical media 'fake news' serves to reinforce the framework of accusations and legal charges that allow such leaders to preside over the jailing of journalists."

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution has inspired people around the world for over 200 years. It was reaffirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and versions of it have been included in the constitutions of many countries; yet while the United States has long been a global leader for freedom of expression, the White House is now actively working to undermine press freedom. President Trump's reckless rhetoric has not only harmed our credibility and our reputation, it has emboldened foreign dictators who fear nothing more than for their misdeeds to be exposed by the media. The consequence is journalists threatened and imprisoned, journalists assassinated with impunity, publishers who are intimidated, and the ultimate casualty is the truth.

PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, 2018 marks the 100-year anniversary of the influenza pandemic that killed an estimated 50 million people, including 670,000 Americans. I suspect most people assume that, given the remarkable advances in modern medicine since 1918, nothing so disastrous could happen again, but in fact, it could, and next time, it could be even worse. The spread of infectious diseases and drug resistance, and the accompanying threats to global security, are on the rise, and the international community is woefully underprepared to fight back.

The several large-scale infectious disease outbreaks of the last two decades, including SARS, H1N1, and Ebola, have revealed the extent to which individual countries and the international community at large need to dramatically improve their preparedness to respond to such potentially catastrophic health crises.

The stark reality is that the threat is increasing. An ever-growing, increasingly mobile global population will provide the breeding ground for the emergence and contagion of existing and new infectious diseases.

The potential threats from infectious disease outbreaks include not only catastrophic loss of life, but severe economic harm and social and political instability. The 2014-15 Ebola outbreak, for example, which began with the death of a 2-year-old boy in a remote Guinean village, ultimately killed

more than 11,000 people across six countries, left thousands of children orphaned, caused an estimated economic loss to those countries of nearly \$3 billion, and resulted in many people losing confidence in their country's public health system.

It is important to note that Ebola, which is spread through direct contact and terrified millions of people including in this country, is hardly the most infectious known disease. Several other disease agents, such as measles and influenza, can be spread through the air and can develop into epidemics or pandemics much more rapidly.

That is one of the reasons why many global health experts fear that an infectious disease outbreak far worse than Ebola will occur sometime in the next 20 years and that the number of outbreaks will become more frequent.

Despite improvements in access to safe water and sanitation, vaccine development, and other public health advances to combat infectious diseases, an enormous amount of work remains.

One of the most important lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak is that time is of the essence. The lack of a rapid, coordinated global response resulted in many preventable deaths. Disease surveillance systems were poor or nonexistent in the severely impacted countries, there was a lack of trained personnel to rapidly deploy, and no effective public communication system was in place to inform and update local communities.

An additional problem was the inability to quickly mobilize resources. Countries and NGOs around the globe lacked a reserve of available funds. The Congress took a step toward addressing this issue in the fiscal year 2017 State and foreign operations appropriations bill, which included a \$70 million emergency reserve fund to address infectious disease outbreaks around the globe. In the fiscal year 2018 Senate version of the State and foreign operations bill, Chairman GRAHAM and I included \$130 million for programs to prevent and respond to such emerging health threats.

However, as I have said before and I will say again, far more needs to be done to build the public health infrastructure to prevent and respond to disease pandemics. As the international community works to be more prepared for infectious disease outbreaks, the U.S. should continue to play a leading role in preparedness planning. Unfortunately, President Trump's fiscal year 2018 budget would cut funding for these very programs, including for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which played an indispensable role in responding to the Ebola and Zika outbreaks, as it has to many other international health crises.

It is time we invest and prepare for pandemics in a similar way as we invest and prepare for war, nuclear disasters, or other large-scale threats to global security. The potential consequences are no less serious. I urge