

GENOCIDE AWARENESS AND
PREVENTION MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month. Today we remember the millions of victims of genocide throughout history, and we recommit to working toward the day when genocide and mass-atrocity crimes are not only inconceivable, Mr. Speaker, but they are nonexistent.

April marks the commemorations of some of the worst genocides in history, including the Holocaust and Rwandan, Cambodian, and Armenian genocides. Time and again, senseless bloodshed has ended innocent lives and fractured families and livelihoods.

My hometown, St. Louis, is home to the largest Bosnian community outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This community has shaped what the city looks and feels like. It has added great cultural diversity to the city, immense intellectual capital, thriving small businesses, and a strong religious presence.

Two decades ago, members of our Bosnian community were refugees. In 1995, Orthodox Serbs, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, initiated a horrific ethnic cleansing campaign against majority Muslim Bosniaks. The escalating bloodshed forced 130,000 Bosnian refugees to seek new lives in the United States. Thousands were murdered in Srebrenica. Today I wish to honor these brave men and women.

The resilience of our Bosnian neighbors has enriched our city, and their courage inspires me. It has inspired me to seek change. Tomorrow I am offering an amendment to the State Department Authorization Act of 2018 asking the administration to study countries at risk of genocide and mass-atrocity crimes and craft training regimens for U.S. Foreign Service officers.

Should this bill become law, America's diplomats will have the know-how to respond to those conflicts on the ground and act before violence spirals out of control. Most importantly, this amendment establishes that the official policy of the United States of America is to regard the prevention of genocide and atrocity crimes as a core national security interest.

However, this is just one step in the right direction. The U.S. Government must improve how it responds to con-

flicts. Last April, I introduced the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act to improve U.S. efforts to prevent mass-atrocity crimes, named after the courageous Auschwitz survivor. The legislation honors the legacy of Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and his life work to fight evil around the world.

Mr. Wiesel was just 15 years old when the Nazis deported him and his family to Auschwitz. He was the only member of his family to survive. Having witnessed the near total destruction of his people, he spent his life defending the persecuted. In his honor, we fight to rectify injustice and protect the most vulnerable in our society and across the globe.

As Mr. Wiesel understood so well, the true horror of genocide is that it is preventable, and the U.S. Government has the tools to effect real change. The Elie Wiesel Act would affirm the mission of the United States Atrocities Prevention Board and its work to coordinate prevention and response efforts. It would also authorize the Complex Crisis Fund to support agile, efficient responses to unforeseen crises overseas.

This time, when America says "never again," our actions will reinforce our platitudes and our words. I thank the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all of my colleagues who share in this fight.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Missouri, for her leadership. I am honored to join her and other distinguished colleagues this evening in recognition of Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.

Preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a moral imperative that deserves to be at the very top of our priority list. Mass atrocities are large-scale, deliberate attacks against civilian populations. They include genocide but also crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing.

After the Holocaust—the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million Jews and members of other persecuted groups by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1941 and 1945—people all around the world vowed to never again stand by in the face of genocide; but since then, mass atrocities, including genocide, have been committed in Indonesia, Cambodia, Guatemala, East Timor, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan, and South Sudan, among other places. Hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered, tortured, disappeared, or suffered sexual violence; and millions more have been forced to flee with profound humanitarian, political, and national security consequences.

I don't believe the world's failure to prevent atrocities is because no one cares. In this era of instant communication powered by social media, most people I meet have seen and passionately condemn the ongoing atrocities in Syria and elsewhere. Nor is it be-

cause no one knows what is happening. Many, many people warned us for years about the potential for genocide against the Rohingya in Burma.

The problem is that we have not been very good at turning knowledge and moral indignation into action to prevent a bad situation from worsening. We must do better. We must do more. This year, in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which I co-chair along with my colleague Congressman RANDY HULTGREN, we are looking at the tools we have as U.S. policymakers to prevent mass atrocities and asking how we can strengthen them.

We are asking what it would mean to institutionalize an atrocity prevention's lens so we don't wait until it is so late and the problem is so big that all we can do is lament the immorality and the inhumanity and then provide humanitarian aid to the victims and survivors. As we undertake this effort, we know that there is a lot of good work already underway in both Chambers of Congress and on both sides of the aisle to find new ways forward.

One example is H.R. 3030, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017, led by Representative ANN WAGNER and cosponsored by both myself and Representative HULTGREN. We also recognize that government officials cannot do this work alone. We need civil society, in all its diversity, to help us. We need community associations, churches, synagogues, mosques, schools, and businesses to take a stand against hate speech, to teach and live tolerance, to document and denounce human rights violations, to open their hearts to reconciliation based on justice. We need to get to the point where our societies recognize and honor every person's innate human dignity.

And I want to take this opportunity to salute one of the many organizations that are doing just this kind of work. STAND is a student-led movement to end mass atrocities and genocide by organizing and educating their peers and communities. I first met student leaders of STAND in 2005 and 2006, when they were part of the national movement that brought the genocide happening in Darfur, Sudan, to public awareness. They were my teachers during that time.

Tonight, representatives of STAND are here listening to this debate. They push us to do better, and I thank them for their commitment and their vision.

Mr. Speaker, mass atrocities are human rights violations on a grand scale. We must find new strategies to prevent them from happening and more effective strategies to interrupt and stop them at the very earliest stages, should they begin to unfold.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Chamber, all of us in this country, need to do more, because I believe, if the United States of America stands for anything, we stand for human rights. We need to be better. We need to be more effective in preventing these mass atrocities and these genocides.

So I am very proud to stand with my colleagues in these efforts. I want to thank the gentlewoman from Missouri for her incredible leadership, and I am honored to participate in this Special Order with her.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for his outstanding words and his support, his support and that of Representative RANDY HULTGREN on sponsoring and cosponsoring with me my piece of legislation, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act.

This truly is an issue that is not just about human rights and giving voice to the voiceless and speaking for the most vulnerable in our society; it is about human dignity across our globe.

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It is about the U.S. responding to these conflicts in the way that only we can and should do and provide the kind of moral authority and support to do so through both our Congress and through our foreign service officers and others who are working across the globe. So I thank the gentleman for his fine words.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY).

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman ANN WAGNER for yielding. She is a wonderful inspiration to me as a new Member.

I also want to thank Congressman MCGOVERN for his comments.

This is really important that she is hosting tonight's Special Order on genocide awareness and prevention.

During the month of April, we joined together to honor victims and survivors to educate the public about genocide—it is hard to believe it is happening in our time—and to advocate for the prevention of future atrocities.

In the past 150 years, tens of millions of men, women, and children have lost their lives during brutal genocides and mass atrocities. Millions have been tortured, raped, and forced from their homes. Some of the darkest moments in world history have occurred, oddly enough, in the month of April.

In April 1933, the Nazi Party began its boycott of Jewish-owned businesses. This marked the beginning of a campaign of hatred that led to the murder of 6 million Jews.

My district is home to thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. I have a long history with Yugoslavia. I began my study of the country of Yugoslavia in 1981 when I first participated as a student, a college student from Colgate University, in a semester abroad, and we traveled throughout the entire Yugoslavia and all the different principalities and republics. It was a spectacular and beautiful country, and it sparked a lifelong interest for me in this region.

I completely fell in love with the country and was fascinated by the people who were there who survived conquests, whether it was from the Ottoman Empire to being part of so many

other parts of human history. They were also victims during the Nazi invasion, as well, during World War II.

I had the lucky opportunity to graduate from college and work as a foreign correspondent in the Press and Cultural Office of the former Yugoslav Consulate in New York. I also worked, at that time, alongside with ABC Sports during the Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo in 1984.

The war in Yugoslavia was a tragic saga in the history of human experience, especially for me, with my long history and love of the country and the people who inhabited this part of world.

I worked with people from the consulate, from all the republics and autonomous provinces from the former Yugoslavia. It just seemed unthinkable to me that this human genocide could occur in a region of the world which had experienced many occupying forces due to its very unique, very important geopolitical, strategic location in the world.

Yugoslavia was always known as the gateway between East and West, the place where you could get from Europe through Yugoslavia to, eventually, the Middle East along the Mediterranean. This region had diverse culture, religion, and people from all parts of Europe and the Middle East, and the world all united together for centuries, actually, living alongside each other with different values. Certainly, they had their differences.

But sadly, unfortunately, after all this history of unrest, the war in Yugoslavia eventually elicited the worst in humankind and was witness to one of the most horrific genocides in our generation against Bosnian citizens.

To the Bosnian community, April, again, marks 26 years since the beginning of the siege in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The horrific period of violence lasted for over 3½ years and was the longest siege in modern warfare. All told, over 10,000 people, including 1,500 children, were killed in Sarajevo during the siege.

In 1995, the worst massacre within Europe since World War II took place. The Srebrenica massacre killed more than 8,000 Bosnian boys and men during the Bosnian War.

In addition to these horrific killings, more than 20,000 civilians were expelled from the area. Many of these Bosnian refugees immigrated to my region. We are thrilled to have them.

It is just worth noting that my son was actually a student in the after-school program at the Jewish Community Center in my area. The Jewish Community Center was actually instrumental in helping to find safe refuge in our community for these Bosnian Muslims who were suffering from this unconscionable genocide and atrocities against them.

I think it was the solidarity and the sympathy and the understanding, the true understanding of genocide that our Jewish citizens recognized in our

region, and we are grateful to them. And we are also grateful to the Bosnian community for the decision to have so many wonderful Bosnian families visit our city and now remain as citizens. They provided the same ingenuity and the entrepreneurship and the vibrancy and the creativity that I remembered during my days of studying this very special part of the world.

I am especially grateful to them for enabling me to sustain the bond that developed between me, my family, who have all traveled to that part of the world, and this amazing group of people for the past 37 years of my life. It has become almost a vocation for me, just my study of Serbo-Croatian and my study of this region.

As we mark these tragedies of the past, we must not overlook what is taking place in the present. I just want to mention a little bit about my city, Utica, New York.

It has been recognized as one of the friendly cities to refugees. The Utica City School District now has over 42 languages spoken, and so we have a number of people coming from war-torn areas where, very graciously and also very generously, our communities have accepted them and provided them a home.

I want to just highlight one of the communities that is in our region as well, and those are the people from Myanmar, where over 700,000 Rohingya people have fled the Rakhine State in the face of expulsions and violent persecution at the hands of government forces.

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad's military butchers its own citizens and uses chemical weapons without regard for international law.

Under this dark cloud of atrocities and massive human rights violations, both present and past, I just want to join with my colleagues today in remembering these and remembering to ensure that these lessons are never forgotten, but more important, if we could only make sure they are never repeated.

I sincerely thank my colleague, Congresswoman ANN WAGNER, for her great leadership on this issue, her tenacity and her courage and her continued fight to try to help these people who are the most needy, who have just been victimized in our society and across our country and our world. I thank her for including me tonight.

It is very special for me to especially recognize the Bosnians. It has been such a long part of my history, and my heart and my sympathy go to these wonderful people who suffered unfairly.

I just want to say thank you again to Mrs. WAGNER for her great leadership on this issue.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her kind words.

The gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) is also a leader in this cause and this effort that is really about, as we said, human dignity and human rights across this world.

We want a day when no longer are these refugees suffering, whether it is in Syria. On the day that President Macron addressed a joint session here in this very Chamber, the President of the People's Republic of France, that stood with the United States, along with the United Kingdom, in the bombings against Syria that were targeted against those who had been barrel-bombed and victimized and murdered by the Assad regime in Syria.

We share a common bond with the Bosnian community. We both have very large Bosnian communities, many of whom started out as refugees some 20 years ago. Now, as I said, the cultural diversity, the business, the religious presence has been just wonderful to see flourish in a district like Missouri's Second Congressional District, so I recognize the common bond that we have there.

I thank Ms. TENNEY for participating in this Special Order that goes to the heart of genocide and mass atrocities across our globe. I know that the people of Ms. TENNEY's district in New York are also appreciative of all she does there to represent them and those who are the most vulnerable in our society, so I thank the gentlewoman from New York.

I now yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri for yielding.

It is Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month, and the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) has been a leader in speaking out on this critical issue for many years now, and we appreciate her leadership on that.

As a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have had the opportunity to advocate for global human rights issues for many years. Tonight, I want to condemn a genocide that has been happening before our eyes: the genocide against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, Burma.

Last September, the Burmese military began a so-called clearing operation, allegedly in response to some insurgent attacks. In reality, this was just an excuse for a massive and barbaric campaign to forcibly remove the Rohingya from Burma altogether and erase their memory from the Rakhine State once and for all, resulting in over 700,000 Rohingya, many of whom are children, fleeing Burma for Bangladesh. This has needlessly left Bangladesh and the world with one of the worst humanitarian crises that the world faces today.

While these numbers are truly shocking, as we learn more about the crimes committed by the Burmese military, there can be no doubt that this is, in fact, genocide.

When the Rohingya arrived in Bangladesh, they told story after story of the crimes that they had witnessed and that they had personally suffered: widespread killings, mass graves, rapes, and other unspeakable horrors

and injuries. These atrocities have been confirmed by many people who had no ax to grind here or anything, so this is something that the world must see and must believe.

In addition, hundreds of villages have been burned and others have been simply bulldozed in a clear attempt to prevent the Rohingya from ever returning. Together, these heinous acts are a deliberate attempt to irreparably harm the Rohingya. This is absolutely genocide.

Together with Mr. ENGEL and Mr. CROWLEY, our colleagues here in the House, I have helped to lead the House's efforts to address this crisis. With our passage of H. Con. Res 90, the House unequivocally condemned the Burmese military's atrocious actions, but more serious action is still needed.

Burma's constitution allows the Burmese military to control much of the government, and civilian leadership has taken virtually no real steps to address this violence. That is why I joined again with Mr. ENGEL and Mr. CROWLEY to introduce the BURMA Act, which applies tough, targeted sanctions on the individuals involved in leading this genocide. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation and then, ultimately, of course, to vote for it when the time comes.

As we remember the victims of all genocides this month, we must work to adequately address one which is unfolding right before our eyes, right before the world's eyes right now. So, again, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Missouri for calling this particular action to the attention of our colleagues and the attention of the world, but also other genocides and other atrocities that have occurred across the globe. She is truly a leader, and we are lucky to have her doing that in Congress on an everyday basis, but also, in particular, this evening.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) for his kind words. He is a leader and a senior member of our House Foreign Affairs Committee, and I also have the privilege of serving on it.

It is an honor to have Congressman CHABOT here at this Special Order during Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month to give voice to those millions of victims and to say we live for a time when this is nonexistent in society.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, to offering my amendment to the State Department Authorization Act of 2018, asking the administration to study countries at risk of genocide and mass atrocity crimes and crafting the kind of training regimens for U.S. foreign service officers that are so very important.

I look forward to the time when my piece of legislation, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, will, Mr. Speaker, be signed into law. It will improve the U.S. efforts to prevent mass atrocity crimes, and I think we all, in this Chamber, on a bi-

partisan level, Mr. Speaker, continue to hope and, more importantly, to work towards a time when America says, "Never again," and our actions reinforce our words.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for coming out. I thank those advocates on the Friends Committee on National Legislation's stand. Together we remember the Carl Wilkens Fellowship and so many others that stand with the victims of genocide and mass atrocities. It is an honor to be with my colleagues here tonight and with the advocacy groups that stand for the millions that say, "Never again."

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 4300. To authorize Pacific Historic Parks to establish a commemorative display to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Pacific Theater of World War II, and for other purposes.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on April 25, 2018, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 4300. To authorize Pacific Historic Parks to establish a commemorative display to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Pacific Theater of World War II, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, April 26, 2018, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4680. A letter from the General Counsel, Government Accountability Office, transmitting a letter reporting violations of the Antideficiency Act by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1351; Public Law 97-258; (96 Stat. 926) and 31 U.S.C. 1517(b); Public Law 110-161, Sec. 1517(b); (121 Stat. 2285); to the Committee on Appropriations.

4681. A letter from the Director, Office of Legislative Affairs, Legal, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Removal of Transferred OTS Regulations Regarding Consumer Protection in Sales of Insurance (RIN: 3064-