

Naturally, as the Kurds leave the space in northern Syria under attack from Turkey, one of the places they are likely to go is to Kurdistan and northern Iraq. In the first 10 days, nearly 9,000 Kurdish refugees from Syria have crossed the border into Iraq.

So as we are looking to humanitarian assistance to deal with the scope of this crisis created by President Trump's action, I hope we will consider humanitarian support to the KRG as Kurds cross the border.

I call on Congress to pass the bill that has been introduced by Senators WARNER and BLUMENTHAL, which would provide special immigrant visa opportunities for Kurdish translators and others who have worked alongside our military. This is something we have had a good track record of doing with people who supported our troops in Iraq and supported our troops in Afghanistan and then are left in harm's way because of that support. Those on the Kurdish side who have worked together with our troops in northern Syria, I think, should be extended the same special immigrant visa status.

The administration should be asked to come to both Houses of Congress and testify about the plan to prevent a resurgent ISIS. This is something Americans should be afraid of. Maybe the administration has a plan about how they will try to protect against that happening, but whether they have a plan or not, they should come to Congress, and we should ask them about it.

Finally, I want the White House to release the transcript of the call between President Trump and President Erdogan in which this deal was hashed. When I heard the testimony of Ambassador Jeffrey at the hearing yesterday—the testimony was public—that he wasn't consulted and that the British and French, who have just recently put in troops, weren't consulted, I still have real questions about why this decision was made. I believe those questions would largely be answered if the transcript of the call between Presidents Erdogan and Trump were delivered, whether in a classified or other context to Congress, so I call on the White House to release the transcript.

I am going to conclude with this: Along with many of our colleagues today, I gathered here in the Chamber at 10:30 to go over to the memorial service for Elijah Cummings, and it was a powerful one. It was a powerful one. Not many Members of Congress—Senate or House—lie in state in the Capitol, and it was a moving occasion.

I knew Elijah Cummings pretty well, being kind of a next-door neighbor of Virginia and Maryland. Over the years, we did a number of events together. One of the things that Representative Cummings used to say in one of these voices that sounded like it was coming out of the Old Testament—you know, it was a fire-and-brimstone voice—was this powerful, powerful statement: "We are better than this."

He would say that, and when he would say it, he would say it about a

number of circumstances. He said it probably most recently, most vividly, when pictures emerged of children in cages at the border. But he would often say it, and he would say it to criticize actions. It would sound like a tough criticism.

But as some of the eulogists today were mentioning that statement of Representative Cummings, I thought about "We are better than this," what it means, and it suddenly struck me as not a critical statement. It suddenly struck me as an extremely optimistic and positive statement. I hadn't really thought of it that way until I heard it earlier today.

Why do I say it was optimistic and positive? The statement "We are better than this" says that whatever the imperfections of the day, we are really more defined by our ideals than our imperfections. We are more defined by our values than our vices. And, sure, when he would use that statement, he would be criticizing an imperfection of the day—a bad decision or bad policy—but he would be criticizing it by saying that we as a country, we as a Congress, we as a Senate, even we as individuals are actually better than this. Our ideals are better than the way we are acting right now.

If you look at reality, you can define it by its imperfection or you can try to define it by its ideals, and I would like to have a judge who looked at me and judged me by my ideals more than my imperfections, even while calling me to live up to my ideals.

The fact that an Elijah Cummings, who had suffered throughout his life many kinds of second-class treatment of discrimination, even being routed into special ed classes as a kid because people thought he was slow when he was actually really, really gifted, the fact that he would go through life and still believe so strongly that our country's values and ideals were a more accurate reflection of who we are than our imperfections and vices is something that I found pretty inspirational as I thought about his life.

I do believe we are better than this with respect to this particular issue. I think we are better than abandoning battlefield allies. I think we are better than empowering authoritarian dictatorships. I think we are better than suggesting we care more about oil than we care about people. I think we are better than facilitating ethnic cleansing of a proud population, including kids. I think we are better than this.

So in the spirit of Representative Cummings, I am going to define us as a nation, us as a Senate, us as individuals more by our ideals than by our imperfect actions and then call us to live up to it. There are concrete steps we can take—some of which I have outlined—that I think will be more in tune with who we actually are and the ideals we hold.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 332, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 457, Justin Reed Walker, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky.

I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall No. 333 the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 457, Justin Reed Walker, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky. •

CUBA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the travel section of the New York Times on Sunday, October 6, 2019, included a lengthy article about the extraordinary music of Cuba and the rich culture that has developed over many generations around the creation and performance of music in that country. The article is too long to insert into the RECORD, but I encourage all Senators to read it as it describes in colorful detail the unique creativity, ingenuity, and complexity of Cuban music that derives from the infinite variety of sounds, instruments, artistry, and talents of Cuban musicians drawing on their African, Haitian, and European heritage.

I mention this because it is illustrative of the many aspects of Cuban society today that Americans should be able to experience for themselves. The Cuban people, who endure many hardships, are as resilient, ingenious, and hard-working as any people I have met. Despite an economy broken by mismanagement that discourages private initiative, a one-party political system that punishes dissent, racial, and gender inequality, and only dreams for a better future, they know how to enjoy life's pleasures and to make strangers feel welcome.

Unfortunately, rather than encouraging Americans to travel to Cuba to experience Cuban society and build relations with the Cuban people, as we do with people living under other autocratic governments, President Trump has slammed the door.

Egged on by a handful of Cuban-American hardliners in the White House, the State Department, and Congress—few, if any, of whom have ever set foot in Cuba—the President has adopted a bankrupt approach toward that country that is steeped in hypocrisy.

These are the same people who for years have unreservedly supported