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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we are grateful that You continue to rule the universe. We acknowledge that though wrong seems so strong, Your purposes will be fulfilled.

Lord, we praise You for Your promise that, in everything, You continue to work for the good of those who love You.

Mighty God, let Your will be done. Bless our lawmakers, listen to their prayers, and guide them with Your truth. Quench their thirst for Your presence with Your abiding love. May they not forget the many times You have helped them in the past. We pray in Your gracious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the signing of the Abraham Accords today at the White House represents a very historic breakthrough for peace in the Middle East. I am not saying that this accord alone will bring peace to that troubled region, but this is the

first tangible progress toward peace in that area in a quarter century.

I met Anwar Sadat at the time of the Camp David Accords in 1978, when he was present in the Ways and Means Committee room over in the House of Representatives, and I had an opportunity also to witness, at the White House, the handshake between Rabin and Arafat in 1993. Both events seemed to herald a new peace in the Middle East that, quite frankly, never materialized, and yet we still have peace between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan.

Israel has been a country for over 72 years. It is the only democracy in the region. It is a major economic, military, and political power, and, of course, it is our greatest ally in the Middle East. It is overdue for other states, then, and those states that are in that area especially to recognize Israel and pursue normal relations.

The outdated notion that recognition of Israel's existence should be withheld until somehow Israelis and Palestinians agree on the details of a two-state solution has not worked. The two-state solution hasn't made an agreement more likely, but it has prevented diplomatic interactions that could be a stabilizing force in an unstable region.

In a polarized time, today's historic accord between Israel and the UAE and Israel and Bahrain is good news that anyone can celebrate. We ought to give President Trump great credit for his leadership in this area. He has delivered in a lot of areas where both Republican and Democratic Presidents could not deliver in the past.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, I discussed a tide of good news flowing out of the Middle East. Peace agreements between Israel and the UAE and Israel and Bahrain will be documented at the White House later today. Even more Arab countries are reportedly considering following suit. The winds of change are blowing across the Middle East. Thanks, in large part, to the hard work of the Trump administration, they are blowing toward peace.

I also mentioned yesterday that not everyone is happy. Not everyone in the Middle East is living in the 21st century. Some are too vested in the old fights and enmities and are afraid to let them go. President Abbas, who is now in the 16th year of a 4-year term at the head of the Palestinian Authority, predictably, tried to dismiss the compromise as nonsense. But, as the Obama administration's Middle East expert Dennis Ross wrote a few days ago, continuing this failed approach would just guarantee Palestinians will be left behind while the rest of the Arab world builds a better future.

And then there is the theocratic basket case that is Iran. Last weekend, as if perfectly scripted to contrast with the hopeful news of optimism and peace coming from the Arab world, the mullahs reminded the whole world of their flagrant disdain for human dignity and basic human rights. They carried out a hurried execution in the face of international condemnation.

Navid Afkari, a 27-year-old Iranian wrestler arrested during a government protest in 2018, was tortured into confessing to the murder of a security guard. He was hanged on Saturday. According to his mother, who was barred from visiting her son before his execution, Navid and his two brothers arrested alongside him were forced to testify against one another. As they mourn their brother, these two young men themselves face decades in prison

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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