

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for what many in this country do not know has occurred, but is exceedingly important. That is the unilateral cease-fire that was declared on August 28, 1998, by the Kurdish rebel leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

Taking part in a live broadcast on Med-TV from his base in the Middle East, Mr. Ocalan noted that, effective September 1, 1998, he has ordered his guerrillas to cease their operations and silence their guns until further notice. This is a momentous opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for the advocates of peace, the defenders of human rights, and the champions of trade with the oil-rich countries that surround this explosive region called Kurdistan.

For several years now, Mr. Speaker, I have risen on this floor to draw the attention of my colleagues to the enduring struggle of the Kurds for peace, democracy, and human rights. I have strongly supported their inalienable right to self-determination. Who among us has not heard of the brutality exercised against the Kurds by Saddam Hussein?

The theocracy in Iran has targeted the top leadership of the Kurdish resistance, and murdered many of its ablest leaders. Turkey, a country that we supported as a bulwark against the Soviet expansion during the Cold War, has left its own trail of desolation in the land of the Kurds.

We cannot afford to call a country a friend, ally, and partner, Mr. Speaker, if it refuses to practice the most basic dictates of democracy, such as the freedom of expression and assembly. Kurds, who constitute one-third of the population of Turkey and number some 20 million, are denied their basic human rights, such as the expression of their identity, the use of their own language, the practice and perpetuation of their culture, as a distinct and indigenous people that has its roots in the dawn of history.

The Turkish constitution, the solemn document binding the peoples of Turkey together, makes no reference to the existence of the Kurds. Its Article 3 expressly forbids the use of the Kurdish language in print and in official settings. The Kurds, thus, can write books in English, French, or German, but not in their native Kurdish. Those who do end up with a prison sentence that can run into a century. The noted Turkish sociologist, Ismail Besikci, who has merely written about the Kurds, has accumulated prison sentences of more than 100 years.

Many of us are well aware, Mr. Speaker, of the historical abuse of the Armenians. In 1915, the Armenians were systematically exterminated in the Ottoman Empire. A similar strategy is now being carried out against the Kurds.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for a bold departure from the old policy of entrusting a blank check to Turkey to do whatever it wishes with its Kurdish minority. The government in Ankara

has abdicated its responsibility, and entrusted the entire Kurdish region to the rule of uncompromising Turkish generals for the last 18 years. They have killed more than 40,000 people, and have driven 3 million from their homes. More than 3,000 Kurdish villages have been destroyed. Duly-elected Kurdish parliamentarians are now rotting in jails. The voices of compromise and reconciliation have been silenced. We are witnessing an historical tragedy.

Now the offer of the cease-fire by the Kurdish rebel leader has the potential to bring peace to this troubled region, and open the way for the coexistence of the Kurds with the Turks. Mr. Ocalan has stated that he is ready to disband his forces if Turkey takes steps to constitutionally recognize its 20 million Kurdish population.

Some courageous leaders in Turkey now recognize the crisis must be solved. On September 11, 1998, Husamettin Cindoruk, leader of the Democratic Turkey Party, a member of the ruling coalition in the Turkish government, actually admitted that negotiations must begin. As he said, Turkey will get nowhere by masking this problem and delaying a solution.

He suggested that the talks that produced the good Friday agreement between Ireland and Britain can be the model for his own country. Members of the largest Turkish party, the Virtue Party, Recai Kutan and Hasim Hasimi, have also expressed similar sentiments. These deputies ought to be commended for their courage. Their words carry the real promise of peace.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but bring to the attention of this body the plight of a group of Turkish and Kurdish women who have gathered in front of Galatasaray High School to protest the disappearance of their loved ones over the last 3 years. Known as the Saturday Mothers, they were visited this past January by our colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JOHN PORTER) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. STENY HOYER), and the President of the Human Rights Alliance, Kathryn Porter.

Under the U.N. Declaration of Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the authorities are obliged to carry out prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations into every report of disappearance. According to Amnesty International, no investigations satisfying these criteria have been carried out. This sad state of affairs was compounded on August 29 when police detained 150 people.

With the declaration of this Kurdish cease-fire, we now have an opportunity. We helped to make possible the Good Friday Agreement, the Dayton talks, and the Israeli-Palestinian accords. We must do no less for the Kurds.

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HOURLY OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the

House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 1 p.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

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IN SUPPORT OF REFORMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, in the next day or so we will be voting on the spending plan, the rest of the spending plan, for fiscal year 1999. An important part of that is a matter involving the International Monetary Fund, and there were many of us who said that we would only vote for that provision with proper reforms.

Mr. Speaker, I am now able to rise in support of reforming the International Monetary Fund and the provisions claimed in the bill ahead of us. The reforms to be included in the appropriations bill, and particularly the enforcement provisions, are not nearly as extensive as I would have liked. Nonetheless, if these reforms are permitted to take place and to be in effect, they will be steps in the right direction toward longer-term reform for the IMF.

The implementation of IMF reforms in this bill will be an important test of the good faith and credibility of the Treasury Department and IMF officials. With regard to the reforms themselves, our review of their development from earlier legislation is critical to understand the intent of Congress.

The structure of the reforms pertaining to transparency and market rates is clearly based on the IMF Transparency and Efficiency Act that was introduced earlier this year by myself and some others known as H.R. 3331, which was introduced, I might add, in conjunction with the majority leader.

The reform proposals in the budget bill are essentially narrower versions of the policy changes mandated in the IMF Transparency and Efficiency Act. The biggest change is in the enforcement mechanism in this act, in the coming act, which has been replaced by a much weaker enforcement provision in the appropriations bill we will vote on in the next day or so.

Obviously, I am disappointed with this change. But with respect to the IMF transparency reforms in the appropriations bill, suffice it to say they reflect a strong congressional consensus that IMF documents be publicly released, and that the minutes of the IMF board meetings should be publicly released in some form. Any abuse of the flexibility provided in this language would clearly not be acceptable.

Second, with regard to the interest rate provisions, the higher interest rates are required any time the definition of conditions of a balance of payments problem emerge, regardless of other problems that may also exist.