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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TIPTON).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 20, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable SCOTT R. TIPTON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CRACKDOWN ON CUBAN DISSIDENTS AND POPE'S VISIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, in the last year we have witnessed dramatic changes in the Middle East and north Africa. There was vast media coverage detailing the brutality of oppressors like Assad in Syria. Yet very little has been said about the escalation of violence against Cuba's internal opposition, a peaceful group that is being attacked by Castro tyrants and

their agents of terror, as we can see in these photos in this poster right next to me, and they're operating just 90 miles from U.S. shores.

But there is an opportunity to correct this wrong, to join forces and shed light on the systematic abuses against freedom-loving Cubans, and to call on Pope Benedict XVI as he prepares to visit the island gulag to publicly support the aspirations of the enslaved Cuban people to exercise their God-given rights.

The Cuban dictatorship has ramped up its use of short-term detentions in order to intimidate and silence the voices of these brave Cubans; and you see here the Ladies in White, and I will explain who they are. They're standing up against tyranny and oppression.

The Castro regime has continued its assault on fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech. The Cuban people are reminded daily that no dissent is ever allowed as they live under constant threat and surveillance by Cuban state security forces. Regime sympathizers and security forces have actually barred opposition leaders from leaving their homes and have violently attacked other peaceful, pro-democracy protesters on the streets.

Just 48 hours ago, the Castro regime detained about 70 members of the peaceful Ladies in White movement, including 18 women who were arrested in Havana on their way to mass. Berta Soler, an important leader in Ladies in White, was detained during the crackdown.

The Ladies in White, as we can see here, they're a peaceful group, founded by wives, mothers, and daughters of political prisoners who have suffered in Castro's gulags. These ladies are advocates of freedom; and by silently marching as they do through the streets, they convey a powerful message of peace and a voice for all the oppressed. The Ladies in White have ex-

pressed their interest in meeting with the Pope during his visit next week but have not been able to confirm that meeting.

A few days ago, 13 members of Cuba's opposition staged a peaceful sit-in at a Catholic church in Havana to call attention to their request for Pope Benedict XVI to meet with pro-democracy advocates during his visit to the island. Reports indicate that Castro agents forcibly removed these human rights defenders from the church, detained them, and subjected them to severe interrogation.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that Pope Benedict will meet with these brave dissidents—as you can see in this new poster, they were dragged through the streets—and shine a light on the struggles of the Cuban people who are living under the rule of the oppressive Castro brothers.

I urge the Catholic church to express its support and solidarity with the internal peaceful opposition and hear the voices of the dissidents who are yearning for freedom. As you can see here, they're being attacked; they're dragged through the streets in Cuba.

The passionate struggle of the internal opposition will not be deterred by the abuses that are occurring daily at the hands of the Castro regime. These recent crackdowns by the regime illustrate its fear, its paranoia, its concern that the Cuban people are no longer afraid of the regime and are demanding a democratic change on the island.

The citizens of Cuba are denied basic human rights by the Castro regime, including the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and due process of law. These fundamental freedoms should not be reserved for the citizens of some countries while denied to those in other nations.

I urge free nations, responsible nations, to condemn the recent action by the Castro brothers, as shown here, to speak out against the atrocities that

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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