

COMMENDING PRESIDENT
NURSULTAN NAZARBAYEV OF
THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 2013

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Republic of Kazakhstan on the 10th anniversary of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative in establishing the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

In the 111th Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed H. Res. 535, a Resolution I introduced to commend the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for calling upon all nations to live in peace and mutual understanding.

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions has always been based on the premise that religion can be an important arbiter for resolving political differences and conflicts, and I am pleased that The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions has created a platform for building bridges of mutual understanding. The Congress has become an effective forum for leaders of world religions to promote a united approach to the critical issue of interreligious dialogue.

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions also has become a full-fledged platform for multi-track-discussions on the most pressing issues of international religious affairs. Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, has hosted four high-profile gatherings of senior clerics from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism and other faiths. It was my privilege to attend a gathering of the Congress which included participation from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Christian denomination of which I am a member.

A symbol of tolerance, Astana was a center for interreligious discussions during Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE Chairmanship and the subsequent Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ministerial Chairmanship in 2011–2012. As a secular state with a predominantly Muslim population, Kazakhstan has been working to promote tolerance and interreligious dialogue since the first days of its independence. As the world was recovering from the aftermath of 9/11, Kazakhstan responded to international grievances by convening a Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

President Nazarbayev also has met with Pope Benedict XVI and other high-ranking representatives of the Vatican, focusing discussions on the necessity for further development of interreligious dialogue. The visit of John Paul Pope II in Kazakhstan in 2001 as well as a visit to the Vatican by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2009 indicates that an active bilateral cooperation exists.

In February 2013, the Chairman of Kazakhstan's Senate and Head of the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions Kairat Mami also met with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican and expressed gratitude to the Holy See for support of the Congress.

During these meetings, Pope Benedict XVI praised the efforts of President Nazarbayev in preserving intercultural understanding and ac-

cord, and wished success, especially in the strengthening of peace.

At the Vatican, Kazakhstan's Chairman of the Agency for Religious Affairs Kairat Lama Sharif and the Cardinals of the Holy See also discussed the prospects of the Congress of Astana and the deepening of interreligious relations. As Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals of the Holy See, stated, "I think that the idea of the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to hold the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is very important. This is a great contribution to the development of interreligious dialogue. And very big work has been conducted for the past 10 years. This year the diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the Vatican is 21. During all this time the mutual aspiration for interreligious and intercultural concord only has strengthened."

An organized photo exhibition at the Vatican was devoted to the 10th anniversary of the Congress, and the photo exhibition will now be displayed in the U.S. Capitol during a reception to be held on May 7, 2013. I am honored to participate in this worthy cause.

Once more, I commend President Nazarbayev for his visionary leadership. President Nazarbayev is a man committed to peace, and I stand with him as he spares no effort to advance understanding. For historical purposes, I thank him for establishing the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, and for promoting religious dialogue between people of all faiths.

AUTISM AWARENESS

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 2013

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise awareness for the 2 million individuals in the U.S. that have autism. Autism is a brain disorder that affects the mental development of children all across the United States.

Autism is a disease that is being thrust into the national spotlight. One in every 88 children in the United States is now affected by it. That number is a ten-fold increase in prevalence over a period of just 40 years. Indeed, autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States.

Some solace is found in the fact that many organizations are making great strides in promoting awareness of autism. One that is active in my district is the Autism Cares Foundation, located out of Richboro, PA. It is organizations such as this that are on the front lines of combating the challenge that autism is presenting to this country. I am proud of the people at Autism Cares and those in organizations like it that are committed to building awareness and outreach as they continue to serve families living with autism.

**BLACK JANUARY AND KHOJALY
MASSACRE**

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 25, 2013

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss several matters of importance to Azer-

baijan. I note that January 20, 2013 marked the 23rd anniversary of an historic and tragic day in the history of the country of Azerbaijan. On the night of January 19, 1990, 26,000 Soviet troops invaded the capital city of Baku and surrounding areas. By the end of the next day, more than 130 people had died, 611 were injured, 841 were arrested and 5 were missing. This event is memorialized as "Black January," and, for the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan this event left an indelible mark on the minds of all citizens.

Soviet troops entered Azerbaijan under the pretext of restoring public order, while actually aiming to forcefully end peaceful demonstrations for independence. However, Soviet incursion further incited aspirations of Azerbaijani people to regain their independence after 70 years of Soviet rule.

In the end, Azerbaijan's pro-Moscow regime grew weaker and by 1991, popular pressure resulted in restoration of independence of Azerbaijan. On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan's Parliament adopted the Declaration on the Restoration of the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and on October 18, 1991, the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved. November 1991 marked the beginning of international recognition of Azerbaijan's independence. The United States opened an embassy in Baku in March 1992 and it has remained committed to aiding Azerbaijan in its transition to democracy and its formation of an open market economy.

Some historical observers have noted that the violence inflicted on the citizens of Baku may have been intended to send a message to other Soviet republics that similar aspirations of nationalism would not be tolerated. In the wake of this horrific act and inspired by the strength of the Azerbaijani people's belief in the principles of democracy, the Republic of Azerbaijan has maintained its independence for more than 16 years, despite lingering economic and social problems from the Soviet era. Today, Azerbaijan has developed into a thriving country with double digit growth, in large part due to a freely-elected president and parliament, free market reforms led by the energy sector, and most importantly, no foreign troops on its soil.

The road to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity for the Azerbaijani people has not come without adversity and sacrifice. Although Azerbaijan thrives today, the people of Azerbaijan recognize those who lost their lives on Black January in 1990 and honor their sacrifice through their commitment to the ideals of democracy. As we reflect on this terrible tragedy, we who believe in the tenets of freedom and the hope of democracy should recognize the incredible sacrifice made by the people of Azerbaijan and by free people all around the world.

I also rise to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the Khojaly massacre perpetrated by Armenian armed forces on February 25 through February 26, 1992 in the town of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Khojaly, now under the occupation of Armenian armed forces, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians in the course of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Khojaly, once the home to 7,000 people, was completely destroyed. Six hundred thirteen people were killed, of which 106 were women, 83 were children and 56 were purported to have been killed. In addition, 1,275