

RECOGNIZING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REBOZO FESTIVAL

HON. JULIA BROWNLEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2014

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the 10th anniversary of the Rebozo Festival of Ventura County, an annual event which celebrates the cultural diversity of our region, promotes communal pride and encourages philanthropic and educational endeavors.

The first Rebozo Festival took place in 2005 when Las Madrinas (the Godmothers), a small group of community volunteers, organized and established the event with the intent of raising funds for local organizations while celebrating the rich heritage of the Latino community by highlighting the colorful Mexican rebozo (shawl) as the symbol and theme of the event.

Over the years, this event has attracted hundreds of local residents and out-of-state visitors who enjoy the liveliness of this cultural celebration, and above all help contribute to local commendable organizations.

The Rebozo Festival's underlying purpose is a philanthropic one. For ten years now, the Rebozo Festival has been able to raise thousands of dollars each year for numerous worthy non-profit organizations focusing on the cultural, social and educational needs of the region. Past recipients of these funds include the Heart 2 Heart Program, United Farm Workers Freeze Relief Fund, the Oxnard College Women's Re-entry Program and Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE). This year's proceeds will benefit Future Leaders of America—Ventura County, an organization that works with our public schools to promote youth empowerment and leadership. Through the selfless dedication and work of the event's organizers, the Rebozo Festival has been able to raise and contribute over \$185,000 to the Ventura County community.

For over a decade, the Rebozo Festival has promoted and celebrated the richness and diversity of the Mexican culture and heritage in Ventura County. It is with great enthusiasm that I offer Las Madrinas my sincere congratulations and I am pleased to join them in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Rebozo Festival.

HONORING JUDGE L. CLIFFORD DAVIS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2014

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge L. Clifford Davis. After 65 years of service, Judge Davis was awarded the Blackstone Award by the Tarrant County Bar Association. The Blackstone Award is given to distinguished individuals who have demonstrated unwavering integrity and courage during their careers.

Judge Davis has a rich history of demonstrable courage as a lawyer. Judge Davis became licensed in Texas in 1953 and eventually moved to Fort Worth where he led the

charge on desegregating the Mansfield and Fort Worth Independent School Districts. Today, the Mansfield and Fort Worth Independent School Districts rank among some of the top public school districts in Texas. In 1983, Judge Davis was elected one of the first African-American state district judges in Tarrant County.

Judge Davis was recognized by the NAACP, inducted into the National Bar Association Hall of Fame, and was awarded the Silver Gavel Award by the Tarrant County Bar Association. Judge Davis is also widely recognized by his peers and his neighbors for strengthening the integrity of our judicial system.

Mr. Speaker, Judge Davis has dedicated his life to empowering individuals who would otherwise be without a voice. Judge Davis had a direct hand in the fight for equal justice during the Civil Rights movement, and has contributed greatly toward improving the legal and public school systems in Texas. We are grateful for Judge Davis' service to our country and courage in the face of adversity and I am proud to recognize Judge Davis.

COMMENDING AMERICAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS FOR STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH CHRISTIANS AND OTHER SMALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN EGYPT, IRAQ AND SYRIA

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize over 200 individuals who signed a Pledge of Solidarity and Call to Action on Behalf of Christians and Other Small Religious Communities in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. I was honored to co-host a press conference earlier this month with my colleague Representative ANNA ESHOO. Together, we co-chair the Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus.

The group of signatories to the Pledge represents the diversity of American Christianity, with individuals hailing not only from the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions but also a variety of sectors: thought leaders, clergy, parachurch heads and university and seminary presidents, among others. They have recognized that unless the American church begins to champion this cause, the foreign policy establishment will hardly lead the way.

I regularly meet with beleaguered Christians from this part of the world. Their stories are eerily similar: believers kidnapped for ransom; churches—some full of worshippers—attacked; clergy targeted for killing. In the face of this violence, Christians are leaving this region in droves. The resounding theme that emerges is quite simply a plea for solidarity, and an appeal for help. Where is the West, they wonder? With the release of this Call to Action, I am heartened to say, that these cries have been heard.

The following individuals spoke at the press conference:

Leith Anderson, Chair, National Association of Evangelicals; His Eminence, Cardinal Donald Wuerl; Archbishop Oshagan Cholayan, Armenian Apostolic Church of America; Jim

Liske, President and CEO, Prison Fellowship Ministries; Canon Andrew White, Chaplain of St George Anglican Church, Baghdad; His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Pastor Jerry Johnson, President and CEO, National Religious Broadcasters; Nina Shea, Director and Senior Scholar, Hudson Institute Center for Religious Freedom; George Marlin, Chair, Aid to the Church in Need-USA; Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Visiting Associate Prof. of Conflict Resolution, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; Johnny Moore, Senior Vice President, Liberty University; Barrett Duke, Vice President for Public Policy and Research Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; and Joseph Kassab, Founder and President, Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment; Institute (reading a statement by Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako).

The text of the Pledge of Solidarity follows:

[May 7, 2014]

PLEDGE OF SOLIDARITY & CALL TO ACTION ON BEHALF OF CHRISTIANS AND OTHER SMALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN EGYPT, IRAQ AND SYRIA

FACTS

In today's Middle East, the majority of the Christian faith communities, which include Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants, suffer violence, abuse and injustice from extremist Islamic forces by virtue of being Christian. Now facing an existential threat to their presence in the lands where Christianity has its roots, the Churches in the Middle East fear they have been largely ignored by their coreligionists in the West.

Christians collectively form the largest religious group in the Middle East that is not Muslim, numbering up to 15 million people. In a siege that has accelerated over the past decade, Egypt, Iraq and Syria—the three Middle Eastern countries with the largest Christian communities remaining—have seen scores of churches deliberately destroyed, many clergy and laypeople targeted for death, kidnapping, intimidation and forcible conversion, and hundreds of thousands of believers driven from their countries. The Christian population in Lebanon, the only other indigenous Church community in the region numbering over 1 million, could be threatened by the instability across its country's borders.

No Christian tradition is spared in this current wave of persecution. While addressing the theme of Christian unity, Pope Francis has called this the "ecumenism of blood," meaning that the extremists do not discriminate among the Christians they are attacking. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has also spoken of the contemporary "crucifixion" of Christians. In these same three countries, other defenseless religious groups—Mandaeans, Yizidis, Baha'is, Ahmadis and others—suffer similarly.

It has become abundantly clear that the brutal extremist campaigns are resulting in the eradication of non-Muslim religious communities or, for those who remain, denying them from having any influence or even basic rights within their society's political, social or cultural spheres. While there is no apparent organization or coordination among the various violent actors from nation to nation, their actions are leading to one conclusion: the very real possibility that Christianity may soon be exiled from the region of its origin.

These assaults continue despite rejection by the majority of Muslims and condemnation by prominent Muslim voices, such as Jordan's Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed and