

young people. He has donated incredible amounts of his own time and many resources to the betterment of children's lives. His mother, Gloria Barron, spent twenty years creating The Touch Museum at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. She was an example of selflessness and service, and to honor his mother, Tom Barron founded the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes. The prize honors young people from diverse backgrounds who have shown exceptional leadership in making the world a better place. Recipients of the award have distinguished themselves by organizing many wonderful projects, including the creation of scholarships, working to conserve a local river, and organizing a rodeo for disabled children.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing our gratitude to Tom Barron for his extraordinary contributions to Mother Earth and to all of her children.

RELIGIOUS FANATICISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, in recent months our Nation, and this Congress, has sought to understand the motivation for and consequences of religious fanaticism, especially in the Middle East. An opinion article entitled "In Saudi Arabia, an Extreme Problem," published in the Washington Post today brings into focus the fundamental problem of religious fanaticism in Saudi Arabia. This insightful article asserts persuasively that political and religious fanaticism has given rise to the deplorable human rights conditions, particularly concerning women, in Saudi Arabia. The article is all the more compelling because its author, Sulaiman Al-Hattlan, is a Saudi Arabian citizen and a courageous voice for democracy and human rights and who has witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of religious fanaticism in his country. He believes that the Saudi government must pursue reforms in order to promote education, free-thinking, political participation, and the human rights of the Saudi people. Mr. Speaker, I earnestly commend the following article to the attention of my colleagues and request that the article be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, May 8, 2002]

IN SAUDI ARABIA, AN EXTREME PROBLEM

(By Sulaiman Al-Hattlan)

While the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah rightly searches for peace in the Middle East, it is equally important for us in Saudi Arabia to seek peace for our own home.

As a citizen of Saudi Arabia, I dread the possibility that Osama bin Laden might instigate a repeat of a deadly 1979 Saudi government mistake. In that year, a group of religious fanatics occupied the Grand Mosque of Mecca. They denounced the legitimacy of the Saudi government, claiming that it wasn't "Islamic" enough. The government managed to reclaim the mosque, and later the group's leader and most of his followers were executed.

But the end of the story had a twist: Though the government killed the extremists, it then essentially adopted their ideology. After the Mecca incident, Saudi au-

thorities began imposing crushingly strict and pointless rules. Women were banned from appearing on television. Music was not allowed to be played in the Saudi media. Stores and malls closed during the five daily prayers. Members of the religious police were granted more power to intervene in people's personal lives. The Saudi government did all of this to please the Islamists, perhaps fearing further extremist threats. The fundamentalists interpreted these government actions as a nod to their power and an indication that they were now dictating the rules of the game.

The result has been all sorts of restrictions that have created notions of fanaticism in the kingdom, and a society with a constant undercurrent of a "witch hunt." Different groups in Saudi society end up competing with fundamentalists over who can appear more conservative in the public eye. Our private life, too, has been full of contradictions and hypocrisy, as we seek to avoid being alienated or excluded as "seculars" or "liberals." In our obsession with our image, and fearing each other, we all lose. As a society, Saudi Arabians lost 20 years of a generation by avoiding a harsh reality: Our government was wrong, and, by extension, so were we. None of us dared to say it loudly then, and some still cannot say it. But our reaction to the 1979 Mecca tragedy has created a generation of angry, confused young people, many of whom have become fanatics, including those 15 Saudis among the 19 suspects in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the 100—or more—Saudi prisoners in Guantanamo. How many other confused young Saudis are still out there?

It does not take a great deal to describe the motives of terrorism. Oppression and poverty are an easy recipe for fanaticism. People with no option of independently leading their lives will more willingly follow an extremist mentality because they know nothing else, and have no moderate alternatives to compare it with. This extremist mentality becomes so entrenched and pervasive that its endurance is not dependent upon the life or death of one persuasive leader. Therefore, whether bin Laden eventually is killed or survives the current war is a temporary concern; in the long term, the real issue is the endurance or destruction of his rabid philosophy.

The Saudi government itself must fight against all kinds of monopoly of thought or debate. Right now, it faces a historical opportunity to develop its educational system, augment freedom of the press and expand women's rights, among other pressing issues. It can begin to give qualified, young, educated Saudis access to more political participation. This would involve ending regionalism, a process that gives greater privileges to some families from certain Saudi regions. As an added bonus, such a measure would safeguard against future tribal conflicts—still very much a part of Saudi national politics—that could result from the continuation of regional economic and political favoritism. It might also help end the civil cold war our society, silently, is going through.

Saudi Arabian society must also start a tough process of social and political reform. Our independent writers and intellectuals should be part of a public social dialogue that tolerates different ideas and thoughts. Our universities need to open doors for political and social activities to their students: At the very minimum, students ought to have the right to form students' organizations. This would teach them the concept of "social activism," and to organize civilized and peaceful activities within their universities. Such ideas can help the next generation create and participate in a productive and peaceful civil society, instead of dying in

Afghanistan or elsewhere for causes that most of them do not even fully comprehend.

What we learned from the deadly 1979 Mecca experience should be put to use now. Ending political and religious fanaticism is crucial for the survival of the Saudi society and its leadership. Release from this chokehold can only come from within Saudi Arabia. Just as Prince Abdullah has become the most promising hope for peace in the Middle East, he is also our best hope for immediate social and political reforms in the kingdom.

ENHANCED BORDER SECURITY AND VISA ENTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I voted "Present" on final passage of the Senate amendments to H.R. 3525, the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2001. I fully support the bill's stated purpose of reducing threats posed by individuals and organizations which would enter the United States with the intent to commit acts of terrorism.

My concern with this measure centers on Section 306, entitled "Restriction On Issuance Of Visas To Nonimmigrants From Countries That Are State Sponsors of International Terrorism." Section 306 establishes a sweeping, over-broad prohibition against issuing non-immigrant visas to citizens of any nation on the State Department's list of terrorist states.

This could preclude the kind of people-to-people contact that can change cultures, and even the political regimes of those countries. Even at the height of the Cold War, we had exchange programs involving students and scholars from Communist nations. By sharing their first-hand experiences and changed perspectives, returnees from these programs helped undermine the demonized image of the USA projected in the official propaganda of the Soviet Union and its satellites.

In many of the nations on the prohibited list, there is a vast reservoir of good will toward the United States and a broadly based public sentiment exerting a countervailing pressure against their regimes' official hostility toward our country. Iran is a case in point, where large numbers of voters in the most recent national elections cast their ballots in favor of candidates who disagreed with the policies of the dominant faction. It is a serious mistake to discount that popular sentiment and to ignore opportunities to strengthen it by exposing citizens of those nations to Americans and American life.

Section 306 authorizes the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and heads of other agencies, to make exceptions to individual aliens covered by this Section if they are found to pose no threat to the safety or national security of the United States. Section 306 directs the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and heads of other agencies, to develop standards for making these exceptions.

The language here is unacceptably broad. If the exemption guidelines or standards were