

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of the order.

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

There was no objection.

KURDISH PRISONERS RELEASED

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to spend a few minutes to talk about some developments recently in the country of Turkey, some of which we celebrate, some of which we have great concern about.

Let me first, by the way, extend my condolences to victims of yesterday's terrorist bombings in Turkey and to the families of the victims. Certainly we want the perpetrators brought to justice quickly.

But I rise to celebrate a small, but very important, victory for human rights that took place last week. Four human rights prisoners in Turkey were released. Leyla Zana, a prominent Kurdish advocate for human rights, and her colleagues, Hatip Dicle, Slim Sadak and Ornhan Dogan, were released from prison following a June 9 appeals court ruling in their favor.

These were Kurdish citizens of Turkey. These were citizens who were elected by majority vote to the Turkish Parliament. These were Kurds who had the nerve to speak their own native language, Kurdish, in the Turkish Parliament; and they were arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Amnesty International declared them prisoners of conscience. They have been there 10 years.

Leyla Zana was probably the best known of the four prisoners. She was the first Kurdish woman elected to Turkey's Parliament who openly and proudly identified herself as a Kurd. In fact, the European Parliament awarded her a Sakharov Prize in 1995 for defending human rights.

I had the great pleasure of getting to know her husband, Mayda, who traveled around the world to talk about the injustice of his wife being in prison. I spent time with her son Ronee who was for a short time a student in Los Angeles. This was a whole family dedicated to human rights for all, and especially to the Kurdish minority who has been denied them in Turkey.

The release of these prisoners of conscience was a result of international pressure, and I want to thank the 21 Members of Congress who joined with me in H. Res. 302 that called for the release of these four parliamentarians. The Kurdish community in the United States, as well as human rights advocates across the country, played an important role in gaining their release.

So we welcome the release of these prisoners of conscience, as well as

other reforms in Turkey, including the introduction of public broadcasting in minority languages. However, serious human rights and repression of the Kurds continue in Turkey.

From June 8-10, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Federation for Human Rights joined with Turkish human rights groups in a joint delegation to investigate the situation in Turkey. They heard continuing allegations of torture and violations of freedom of expression, assembly, association, religion, and the right to a fair trial. They expressed concern about prisons, national minorities, the lack of independent investigations into human rights violations, and internal displacement.

The State Department human rights report, released just in February, also found that serious human rights problems exist. The report says that security forces killed 43 people last year and participated in widespread torture, beatings, and other abuses. The Turkish Government continued to limit free speech in the press and, in particular, restricted expression by people sympathetic to Kurdish cultural or nationalist viewpoints.

So we are pleased at the release of Leyla Zana and her colleagues, but we are not placated by this good news. We demand greater progress. The European Union should insist that Turkey take greater strides to improve its human rights record and treatment of the Kurds before joining the European Union. Turkey needs to realize that its Kurdish citizens enrich the country rather than threaten it.

President Bush will visit Turkey for a NATO summit next week. He should use this opportunity to press for greater respect for human rights. I would hope that he meets with Leyla Zana and shows his respect for human rights for the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn and claim the gentleman from Nebraska's (Mr. OSBORNE) time.

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

There was no objection.

TWO INDEPENDENCE DAYS

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, as we depart for the Independence Day recess on Capitol Hill, families and communities across America will prepare for celebrations and remembrances of the 4th of July; and as I and my family and my heartland district in eastern Indiana prepare to do likewise, I could not help but feel that, in fact, in coming days we will celebrate not one, but two Independence Days: one for an 18th century colonial power born in violent conflict, aided by an ally in liberty to throw off the shackles of a despotic tyrant who beset its people for decades, and of that struggle, those people would write some 228 years ago that they held truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

They went on to cite a long string of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object of absolute despotism, and claimed with their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor that it was their right and their duty to throw off such government. One independence day.

The other will take place for the first time this coming Wednesday, not an 18th century colonial nation, but a 21st century modern power in the Middle East whose freedom is also being born at this very hour in violent conflict, aided by the armies of a liberty-loving ally to throw off the despotism and tyranny that has beset its people for decades and of their freedom the people of Iraq wrote these words in the preamble to their Constitution:

"The people of Iraq, striving to reclaim their freedom which was usurped by the previous tyrannical regime, rejecting violence and coercion in all its forms, and particularly when used as instruments of governance, have determined that they shall hereafter remain a free people governed under the rule of law."

Two Independence Days: One, 228th anniversary of ours on the 4th of July; and the other, the first-ever Independence Day for a free and democratic Iraq on a day that will live in history for the people of that great nation as a day of celebration, June 30, 2004.

□ 1530

Two independence days. We will celebrate in each of them the inexorable