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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. EMMER of Minnesota).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 16, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM EMMER 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 6, 2015, 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the sobering but extremely consequential topic of Christian persecution.

Last week, I had the honor of visiting with more than 100 parishioners of St. Alphonsus Liguori Catholic Church in Zionsville, Indiana, including many interested high school students who shared with me their passionate concerns about the senseless persecution of their Christian brethren.

Through the church's Social Action Committee, they wanted to know how a small, faithful community could make a difference in bringing attention to this commonly overlooked matter. However, they wondered if their cries for mercy were falling on deaf ears in Washington. They felt helpless in bringing to light the barbarity, torture, and living conditions that Christians in places like Iran endure.

The parishioners at St. Alphonsus felt that too often horrendous massacres are met with isolationism and arguments that it is not America's job to promote human rights beyond our shores.

Today I want to let the people of St. Alphonsus and all those who seek to give a voice to the silenced victims of religious persecution know I hear you, and others in Washington, D.C., do as well.

I believe that America must re-assume its leadership role in protecting those most destitute and downtrodden, that American leadership in the world should advance not only our national interests but also the interests of those who yearn for freedom across the globe, that Christians who have to shield their faith for fear of crucifixion or beheading have an ally in America, an ally who will fight for the dignity of all mankind.

Incidents of persecution of Christians more than doubled in 2014 alone. I wish I could say I was surprised by this increase, but I am not. I think this is part of the larger trend around the globe.

The world we live in is remarkably unstable right now. People lack security. Too many regions of our world are fending off the rise of groups that espouse extremely radical ideologies, groups that hate this Nation, groups that often hate all other religions, groups that feed off of destruction and poverty, groups that value violence over peace, groups that are clearly not

a true or worthy representation of the religions they claim as their own.

The parishioners at St. Alphonsus Church asked me: What can we do?

I told them America first needs a smart and decisive plan because the threat Christians face is significant, and it is not going away.

The United States must work with free nations across the globe to reaffirm a simple but important message: human rights are not negotiable. Countries don't get to pick and choose which rights they allow and which ones they deny. We also need to work more locally to raise awareness of the specific issue of Christian persecution. There must be a strong grassroots element to this effort.

Each month, approximately 180 Christians are killed across the globe because of their faith. That is a startling number. In America, a country where it is so easy to take our freedoms for granted, it is easy not to notice the pain and suffering of others, but we must. And I know we are a truly generous and kind people.

When Japanese communities were torn apart by a massive tsunami in 2009, Americans mobilized to donate more than \$700 million in charitable relief.

Americans always answer the call when people are suffering. Well, today there is clearly a tsunami of hatred sweeping parts of the world, and there are people who need our help. So churches and other groups with a concern for their fellow Christians and all global citizens need to take a stand.

Like those at St. Alphonsus have, Christians and people of all faiths across this Nation need to reach out to their elected officials and let them know of the tragic persecution of Christians and that it deserves attention, that religious freedom is a value we must defend and promote. Only then will everyone in this body know what was foretold in Matthew, 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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