

Witness calls Honduras the most dangerous place in the world for environmental activists. More than 100 environmental activists have been killed in the last 5 years there, and many activists and community leaders remain at risk. We must do everything in our power to stop this violence and harassment in Honduras.

Please rest in peace, Berta Caceres and Nelson Garcia. The people who remain behind will continue to fight for environmental justice and indigenous rights, and we here in the United States join that fight.

U.S. SUPREME COURT NOMINEE MERRICK GARLAND

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to spend a few minutes on another important topic as well.

Today, President Obama nominated Chief Justice Merrick Garland to fill the vacancy that has been left on the Supreme Court by Associate Justice Antonin Scalia.

Judge Garland has more Federal judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in history. His work on the D.C. circuit court, an appointment to which he was confirmed with strong bipartisan support, has earned praise from Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. He is qualified. He is competent. He is not the ultraliberal that many of my conservative colleagues feared.

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Yet, following up on his promise that the Senate would consider absolutely no one that President Obama put forward, Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL said today: "It is a president's constitutional right to nominate a Supreme Court justice, and it is the Senate's constitutional right to act as a check on a president and withhold its consent."

I beg to differ. I think it is the President's constitutional responsibility, not just a prerogative, to fill the bench of the Supreme Court. Withholding consent, something that is typically done when a candidate is underqualified or inappropriate, is far different than just ignoring the process altogether.

This is a political decision made about the only body that shouldn't be exposed to such things. It goes beyond just a filibuster or commentary from a few outliers.

And if Republicans follow through with their plan, it would constitute the longest vacancy with no vote on a nominee ever. There is no precedent for this. There have been appointments, nominations, and, above all, hearings during Presidential election years.

It is flat out ridiculous to refuse a man as qualified as Judge Garland even hearings. This is a dereliction of duty that surpasses the sadly run-of-the-mill inability of the majority to get anything done, from funding the government until the eleventh hour to

passing a budget, to actually governing.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I came to the floor without taking the time to say this: The Senate must change course and consider Judge Garland on his merits. He has earned bipartisan support before, and he deserves it again.

I need to remind this body and the Senate that the President of the United States was elected for a second term and that term includes four full years.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my Special Order hour.

I yield back the balance of my time.

#### HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 121

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week there were a few very important votes that occurred on complex issues that I would like to discuss here today. They were with regards to H. Con. Res. 75 and H. Con. Res. 121, which is the one I will discuss now.

Make no mistake. H. Con. Res. 121 is a war bill. It is a thinly veiled attempt to use the rationale of humanitarianism as a justification for overthrowing the Syrian Government of Assad.

Similar resolutions were used in the past to legitimize the regime-change wars to overthrow the governments of Iraq and Libya. I will have no part of it. I voted "no" on H. Con. Res. 121. I voted "no" against more unnecessary interventionist regime-change wars.

We all know that Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria, is a brutal dictator. But this resolution's purpose is not merely to recognize him as such. Rather, it was a call to action. Specifically, it is a call to escalate our war to overthrow the Syrian Government of Assad.

For the last 5 years, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others have been working hand in hand in that war to overthrow the Assad Government, supposedly for humanitarian reasons. But I ask: How has this war to overthrow Assad actually helped humanity?

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been killed. Millions have become homeless refugees. Much of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed.

Terrorist organizations like ISIS, al Qaeda, and others have taken over large areas of the country and are engaging in genocide.

Now the same people who are behind this war to overthrow Assad want to escalate that war, and this resolution is an attempt to gin up public support for that escalation.

This resolution urges the administration to create "additional mechanisms

for the protection of civilians," which is really coded language for the creation of a so-called no-fly zone or safe zone.

The creation of this no-fly zone or safe zone in Syria would be a major escalation of the war. Doing this would cost billions of dollars, require tens of thousands of ground troops, and a massive U.S. air presence. It won't work.

Furthermore, it will likely result in a direct confrontation between the United States and Russia. Fortunately, President Obama has thus far opposed implementing such a so-called no-fly zone and has resisted pressure to escalate this war in this way.

The fact is that the main areas currently in Syria where Christian, Alawites, Druze, Yazidis, and other religious minorities can practice their faith without fear of persecution are in the Syrian territories where Assad maintains control.

Therefore, the overthrow of Assad would worsen the genocidal activities by ISIS and al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations against Christians, Alawites, and other Syrian religious minorities.

If the U.S. has learned nothing else from Iraq and Libya, we should have learned that toppling ruthless dictators in the Middle East creates even more human suffering and strengthens our enemy, groups like ISIS and other terrorist organizations in those countries.

It is undeniable that, in both Iraq and Libya, humanitarian conditions today are far worse than they were before those governments were toppled and ISIS and other terrorist organizations are far more powerful with greater strongholds, causing even more suffering.

If the U.S. is successful in its current efforts to overthrow the Syrian Government of Assad, allowing groups like ISIS and al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations to take over all of Syria, which is what will happen, including those Assad-controlled areas where Christians and other religious minorities remain protected, the United States will be morally culpable for the genocide that will occur as a result.

This is exactly what happened when we overthrew Saddam Hussein in Iraq. It is what happened in Libya when we overthrew Muammar Gaddafi. To do the same thing over and over and expect a different result is the definition of insanity.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) for 30 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be recognized to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives