

have delivered, and are today protecting our mighty nation. In commemorating the achievements of America's veterans, we should recommit our own lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor to maintenance of liberty—just as the veterans we honor have so nobly done.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT AND
RECOGNITION OF THE DETROIT
ECONOMIC SUMMIT

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2001

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to call the House's attention to an important event that will take place next week in the heart of Michigan—the Detroit Economic Summit. On November 14–15, 2001, representatives of a variety of senior officials from Arab countries and political organizations, Michigan-based companies, and the leadership and rank-and-file members of the Arab American and community organizations in the Detroit and Dearborn area will assemble for a series of events devoted to promoting trade and economic ties between the United States and the countries of the Near East.

The Summit is being spearheaded by the American Arab Chamber of Commerce in Dearborn, which has worked hard to draw in the talents of like-minded organizations, businesses and institutions such as the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, the CMS Energy Corporation, the Detroit Medical Center, the Ford Motor Company, and others. The Summit will feature the participation of the Secretary General of the Arab League, His Excellency Amre Moussa, who is leading a delegation consisting of the distinguished Ambassadors of the Arab countries. Working collectively, and drawing from their deep experience in both politics and commerce, the organizers and participants in these events are all working for a common, and in my view, very important objective: establishing the Detroit/Dearborn area as the gateway for American trade, investment and commerce with the Near East region.

As many of our colleagues know, Mr. Speaker, the Near East region holds a vast wealth of potential as an investment destination and trading partner for businesses, financial institutions and investors from the United States. Many of the governments of the region have made significant strides in adopting clearer and more transparent trade, investment and regulatory regimes and have made corresponding efforts to privatize state-owned industries and open up their economies. These efforts have helped to diversify and increase the levels of economic interaction between the United States and the region, and with the concerted efforts of those who are participating in the Summit, there is good cause to anticipate further growth and expansion.

The promotion of trade and investment is important not only for its impact on economic growth, employment, and standards of living in the United States and the Near East. Stronger economic ties also bring forth associated ben-

efits, such as a greater appreciation of cultural and religious distinctions of the American and Arab peoples. As economic activity extends across borders in the region and with the United States, the prospects for peace, stability, and common understanding are likewise advanced. In times such as these, I trust that all of us will appreciate the importance of achieving these objectives.

As the home to hundreds of thousands of Arab Americans, the Detroit area is naturally suited to serve as a gateway for commerce between the United States and the Arab states. At the same time, Michigan-based companies are leading the way in increasing the volume of two-way trade and investment: everything from large-scale endeavors like CMS Energy's pioneering work in producing power and desalinated water in the Arabian Gulf or Ford's exports to the region, to small-scale imports of goods and wares from the region to the Detroit area.

Much like Miami has become the hub for economic ties between the United States and Latin America, The Detroit/Dearborn area is well on the path toward establishing itself as America's bridge to the Arab World. I urge my colleagues to join me welcoming the participants of the Economic Summit to Michigan and wishing them well as they continue with their vital work. I would also ask that the House acknowledge the hard work and vision of the organizers of this event, the Arab American Chamber of Commerce.

HUMAN-RIGHTS ACTIVIST
DETAINED IN INDIA

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 8, 2001

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the Indian government recently detained Mrs. Paramjit Kaur Khalra, widow of a human-rights activist and a human-rights activist in her own right, along with six other human-rights activists, including the Vice President of the Punjab Human rights Organization (PHRO), Kirpal Singh Randhawa. They were apparently arrested under TADA, the repressive "Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act," which expired in 1995. Now India has promulgated an even worse law, known as POTO, which would make advocating the breakup of India a "terrorist offense" and would allow the arrest of journalists for publishing information critical of the government. Is this the kind of law promulgated in a democratic and free society?

You may remember, Mr. Speaker, that the President of the PHRO, Judge Ajit Singh Bains, testified several years ago before the Human Rights Caucus of the House and was very impressive. After his testimony, you could have no doubt that Punjab under Indian rule is a very tyrannical state.

Mrs. Khalra is the widow of Jaswant Singh Khalra, who exposed the Indian government's policy of mass, secret cremations of Sikhs. This policy has been called "worse than a genocide" by the Punjab High Court. For exposing it, Mr. Khalra was kidnapped from his house in Amritsar in September 1995 and tor-

tured to death. None of the police officers responsible has ever been punished. Now Mrs. Khalra's efforts to continue her husband's work have gotten her arrested. It is clear that she and the other human-rights activists were arrested to prevent their participation in political events and stop public protest. India still believes, after all the bloodshed, that it can intimidate the Sikhs and other minorities such as the Christians of Nagaland, the Muslims of Kashmir, and others into submission to Hindu supremacy.

It is not a good time to be a widow in India, Mr. Speaker. First the Indian government tried to expel the widow of missionary Graham Staines from the country, and now they are harassing Mrs. Khalra. This is Indian democracy in action, and it is not pretty.

There was one eyewitness to the kidnapping of Jaswant Singh Khalra, a man named Rajiv Singh Randhawa. Last year, he was arrested in front of the Golden Temple in Amritsar for trying to hand a petition to the British Home Minister. In light of repeated incidents like this, India should be embarrassed to proclaim itself "the world's largest democracy."

Mr. Speaker, the United States should not sit idly by and let these acts of repression go on without consequences. Our government must immediately press for the release of Mrs. Khalra and the 52,000-plus Sikh political prisoners currently being held without charge or trial in India, as well as the thousands of other political prisoners of other nationalities. All of them must be released. If they are not, I urge them to secure their release by running for political office from their jail cells.

In addition, America should stop its aid to India and support an internationally-supervised vote on the political status of Punjab, Khalistan, of Kashmir, of Nagalim, and of all the countries seeking their independence. Remember that India promised in 1948 to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir, a promise it has not kept. It is time for India to start acting like a democracy. This vote would be a good way to start.

Mr. Speaker, I have here an Urgent Action Request from the Canadian branch of the World Sikh Organization demanding the immediate release of Mrs. Khalra. It was brought to me by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. I would like to place it in the RECORD to show my colleagues the real workings of Indian democracy.

URGENT ACTION REQUEST

OTTAWA, NOVEMBER 3, 2001.—The World Sikh Organization requests your immediate assistance to procure the release of Mrs. Laswant Singh Khalra and six other human rights activists and lawyers who were arrested by the Indian police on November 2, 2001. It is known that these individuals were arrested to prevent their participation in political events in Punjab, and to prevent public protest. Mrs. Khalra's husband, Jaswant Singh was the lead investigator who uncovered illegal cremation grounds maintained throughout Punjab by police. Mr. Khalra and Mr. Jaspal Singh Dhillon both leaders of the Human Rights Wing of the Shiromani Akali Dal were arrested, and presumably tortured by the very same Punjab Police they sought to prosecute. Mr. Khalra was tortured to death, and now Mrs. Khalra and six others have been arrested under a charge of "threat to the peace".