

millions of people. This relates to the fate of one man. Paul Salopek is not just another journalist, not just another correspondent. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner.

I first started reading his work in the Chicago Tribune. As soon as I would finish a piece he had written, I would rush to the byline to see who wrote this. He is truly a gifted writer. He has written some things which I have saved and clipped out, that I hang onto. They are dog-eared and yellowed from age, he is just that good.

When I went to the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this last December with Senator BROWBACK, we were touring an area where, sadly, 5,000 people a day die in this region of Africa. Very few people in the West are aware of it. In preparation for that journey, we looked at the National Geographic special on Africa and particularly the section on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was, once again, one of those pieces of writing that stops you cold. And you think: I wish I had the gift to come up with the words of this writer. The writer, once again, was Paul Salopek.

On August 6, Paul Salopek was arrested in the Sudan while on freelance assignment for the National Geographic, along with his driver and interpreter. He has been charged, as I said, with espionage and with writing "false news," along with an immigration violation.

When you look at his assignment, it was not even close to being politically sensitive. National Geographic had sent him to this region to write about the history and culture of the Sahel region of Africa. I know that he undertook this assignment with the same commitment and passion as he has in all of his work.

When we visited the Congo, one of the women there, who had worked with Paul while he was in that region, said she could not remember another writer who became so immersed in his work, spending the entire day with the Pygmy people of the Congo, and then at night he would be off to his tent and, by just a dim light, working on his computer writing all night to bring together all of his thoughts.

His subject, in this case for the National Geographic, has been the geography, history, culture, environment, wildlife, natural resources, religion, landscape, and populace of the Sahel, a wide swath of land running from the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa. I know when the piece is finally written it will be well worth reading.

The name "Sahel" comes from the Arabic word for "border" or "margin." And for many Americans, the Sahel is undoubtedly on the margins of their awareness. Paul Salopek's article would have helped change that. Now he awaits trial in El Fasher, in the North Darfur region of Sudan.

I have been in close contact with the U.S. Embassy in Sudan and understand he is being treated well while he awaits trial. Mr. Bishop, who works for our embassy in Khartoum, has been in frequent contact, visiting him almost on a daily basis, providing him with water and food and the basics of life and making certain he is being taken care of. And I am glad to report that is happening. I appreciate that fact and all the efforts the State Department and others have undertaken on his behalf.

Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer urged Sudanese President al-Bashir to release him. And many of us in Congress have been working to try to help effect his release.

Let me make it clear: Those of us who know of the work of Paul Salopek know one thing for certain, Paul Salopek is a journalist. He is not a spy. He has written on everything from the human genome diversity project, for which he won his first Pulitzer Prize, to the civil war in the Congo, for which he won his second.

He has been a student of cultural geography, which informs his current project on the Sahel, once traveling hundreds of miles by mule through the remote Sierra Madre region in Mexico.

In another brilliant story, Paul traced the route of a barrel of oil, tracking shipments of crude oil from across the globe, until they reached South Elgin in my home State of Illinois, and filled the gas tanks of the cars in my home State.

He has written a touching article about 7-year-old brides in Ethiopia and a 13-year-old school girl in Angola who was tortured after she was accused of witchcraft.

His writing captures the reader from the opening sentence, illuminating and educating along the way. As Adlai Stevenson once said: He can make the words march on the page.

One of his former colleagues, now with the Seattle Times, wrote this week:

If we don't care about Paul, we don't care about the stories he writes. We don't care about the world and the people in its farthest reaches and most desperate circumstances. His work serves us all, to help us understand and feel.

I would like to associate myself with that quotation.

Paul Salopek is a journalist, a reporter, and most fundamentally he is a writer. He crossed a border without the correct paperwork, but he has spent his writing career breaking down borders that divide us in this world.

I am hopeful the Government of Sudan will recognize the fact that although Paul did enter the country without a visa, which is a civil violation, he did so as a writer, writing for the National Geographic magazine. He is not a spy. He did not come to this region of the world with any political agenda.

I am heartened by the news that the Khartoum Government has issued a pardon to a Slovenian writer and envoy who had been convicted of similar charges.

I hope that Mr. Salopek can be released even more quickly.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors, Reporters without Borders, the Overseas Press Club, and the Committee to Protect Journalists have all issued statements urging the release of Paul Salopek and his driver and translator who were detained with them.

I want to repeat those calls on the floor of the Senate.

This is an opportunity for the Sudanese Government to make one small step in the right direction, toward recognizing basic freedoms.

I want to thank all those who tried to help; my colleague, Senator OBAMA, traveling in Africa, who has tried to do his part to help Paul Salopek. I also want to acknowledge the work that has been done by former Congressman, former Ambassador, former Secretary, now Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, who is also trying to help in every way he can.

This is an opportunity for the Sudanese Government to make the right step in the right direction, toward recognizing basic freedoms, toward demonstrating the kind of humanitarianism which will leave, I think, the Sudanese Government in good stead with many countries around the world.

It is my deepest hope that Paul Salopek will soon be reunited with his family and soon be released from this prison. It is a matter of the freedom of the press but, as I said, also the freedom of one fine man.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REPORT 109-325

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have a transmittal letter dated September 5, 2006 printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: