

Hundreds of Vermonters have volunteered to help these refugees adapt to life in Vermont, welcoming them into their homes, schools, and places of worship. The newcomers have had a profound effect on life in Vermont, starting small businesses, excelling in local soccer teams, creating art, running community gardens, and sharing their cultures. In one Vermont school district, all signs are in English, Vietnamese, and Serbo-Croatian, reflecting just a few of the many languages spoken by the diverse student population. Not only do the Vermont-born students learn a little more about the world from their classmates who are refugees, but they also learn an important lesson about the resolve and durability of the human spirit.

While I am proud of the United States' long-standing commitment to refugees, I believe that we as lawmakers can do better for the world's most vulnerable populations. That is why I introduced S.3113, the Refugee Protection Act of 2010. The bill will bring the United States back into compliance with the Refugee Convention. Through modifications to the statute and misinterpretations of law in court decisions, the United States is falling short in some areas of refugee protection. The bill corrects serious problems in our law, such as the material support provision, which can prevent innocent victims of persecution from gaining protection. It also repeals the one-year filing deadline for asylum seekers in the United States. The deadline was unnecessary when it was added to the law in 1996, and remains unnecessary now. The bill also improves due process protections for asylum seekers without lowering the standards that one must meet in order to gain refugee status.

For resettled refugees in the United States, the bill ensures that per capita grants to assist these new Americans are adjusted every year to reflect the cost of living and inflation. The Obama administration raised the per capita grant level this year after it had languished at an unacceptably low level for years. I commend that action, but want to ensure the number does not remain stagnant.

I thank Senators LEVIN, AKAKA, DURBIN, and BURRIS for their support of the Refugee Protection Act. I hope that on World Refugee Day, others will join us in helping victims of persecution worldwide.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, this Sunday, June 20, the world will observe the tenth annual World Refugee Day. On this day, we call attention to humanity's efforts, through the United Nations, the work of individual governments, and of nongovernmental organizations, to alleviate the plight of those forced from their homes by conflict or hatred.

Sadly, while the world's commitment to these refugees is great, the scope of

the problem is even greater. Last year, more than 43 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes, the largest number since the mid-1990s. At the same time, data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees show that the number of refugees who resettled in 2009 was at the lowest level in two decades.

These figures, just for 2009, include more than 2.8 million people who have fled homes in Afghanistan, more than 1.7 million people from Iraq, more than half a million in Somalia, nearly half a million from the Democratic Republic of Congo. These stunning numbers represent the human cost of humanity's inability to live in peace. These seemingly endless millions represent mothers who struggle to feed their babies, children unable to go to school, families without dependable access to clean water or food or medical care. They are without homes, and if the world is silent to their pleas for aid, they will be without hope.

Fortunately, this human tragedy has prompted global action, with the United States in the lead. The Refugee Act of 1980 guides U.S. policy with regards to refugees, and since its passage, more than two and a half million people forced from their homes have been resettled in the United States. Of the more than 112,000 refugees who found refuge in countries other than their home in 2009, about 80,000, or nearly three-quarters, were resettled in the United States.

Despite our commitment to aiding refugees and to finding them new homes, our current policies often stand in the way of fulfilling our responsibility to help. Current law and administrative practice too often put unnecessary burdens on those seeking asylum here, even barring some who hope to escape the worst sorts of violence and persecution from entering the United States.

Seeking to address these problems, I have joined Senators LEAHY and DURBIN in sponsoring the Refugee Protection Act of 2010. Our legislation would extend protections for those seeking asylum in the United States; reform the process by which asylum seekers can be expelled from this country; modify existing law to ensure that legitimate asylum-seekers are not inadvertently caught up in antiterrorism protections while ensuring that terrorists are unable to manipulate the system to gain entry; and ease the path to resettlement for asylum-seekers and their families. Failing to remedy these gaps in our refugee law would carry a great human cost. As Dan Glickman, the president of Refugees International, testified to the Judiciary Committee during a hearing on our bill last month, "The Refugee Protection Act will help us do the right thing by creating a more efficient and fair process for providing safe haven to the world's most vulnerable."

We face this continuing challenge without one of the world's most eloquent and effective advocates for the world's refugees. Senator Ted Kennedy led the drive to pass the original Refugee Act of 1980. He was a tireless advocate for the innocent victims of conflict, religious persecution and ethnic hatred. As we approach another World Refugee Day, we would benefit enormously from his leadership, but we can gain inspiration from his example. So long as there are people forced from their homes by war and persecution, this Nation will have a responsibility to act, and the Refugee Protection Act is an important opportunity to do so.

UIGHUR PROTESTS IN URUMQI

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, it has been nearly a year since deadly ethnic rioting between ethnic Han Chinese and the native Uighur population engulfed the city of Urumqi in China's vast, far-western region of Xianjiang—one of the worst ethnic clashes in China in decades.

Last year, after the protests began, I spoke on the floor, expressing my concern about human rights abuses and a lack of press freedom in Xianjiang, as demonstrated by the decision by the Chinese government to block access to journalists, which prevented the world from knowing the truth of what was occurring. Unfortunately, it is now clear that things were even worse than we knew at the time.

The Chinese police, the People's Armed Police, and the military responded with a heavy hand, conducting many large-scale sweep operations in two mostly Uighur areas of the city, operations that reportedly continued at least through mid-August of 2009. Internet and text-messaging services were immediately limited or cut off, and were only restored last month, depriving the people of Xianjiang from access to news, information, means of communication, and other benefits of connective technology.

The official death toll from the July 5, 2009, rioting was reportedly 197—though human rights observers say the actual number of casualties is higher. At least 1,700 people were injured, and some 1,500 people, by the government's own account, were detained. According to an insightful article published in the Washington Post this week, as of early March, there have been 25 death sentences among the 198 people officially sentenced. Twenty-three of those 25 were ethnic Uighurs.

The Post, which sent a reporter to Urumqi for a look at the city 1 year after the riots, reports that residents "seem most terrified of talking," and not just with journalists but also with each other. Uniformed and plainclothes police officers are pervasive, the newspaper reports. Most Uighurs are Sunni Muslims, but their religious freedoms

have been sharply curtailed. Economically, they lag well behind the ethnic Han population.

I condemn the continued repression of the Uighurs, as well as the violence perpetrated against all innocent civilians in China, and I call on the Chinese government to bring this reprehensible behavior to an end. I also reiterate my call from last year on the Chinese government to open Internet and mobile phone access, end jamming of international broadcasting, and lift the grave and growing restrictions on the press. If China is going to assume a position of leadership in the international community on par with its economic standing, it must lead by example in granting essential freedoms and human rights to its citizens.

I ask unanimous consent that the Washington Post article entitled "One year later, China's crackdown after Uighur riots haunts a homeland" published on June 15 be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post Foreign Service, June 15, 2010]

ONE YEAR LATER, CHINA'S CRACKDOWN AFTER UIGHUR RIOTS HAUNTS A HOMELAND
(By Lauren Keane)

URUMQI, CHINA.—A hulking shell of a department store towers over this city's Uighur quarter, a reminder of what can be lost here by speaking up.

For years, it was the flagship of the business empire of Rebiya Kadeer, an exiled leader and matriarch of the Uighur people. If Chinese government accounts are accurate, she helped instigate fierce ethnic riots that killed hundreds and injured thousands here last July—an accusation she vehemently denies.

Still a prominent landmark even in its ruin, the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Center was partially confiscated by the government in 2006 when Kadeer's son was charged with tax evasion, although tenants were allowed to stay. After the riots, it was shuttered and slated for destruction. The government said the building had failed fire inspections, but it seems in no hurry to set a demolition date.

The forsaken structure makes for an effective deterrent. Last summer's chaos has been replaced with a level of fear that is striking even for one of China's most repressed regions. Residents are afraid of attracting any attention, afraid of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. But they seem most terrified of talking.

"Every single family on this block is missing someone," said Hasiya, a 33-year-old Uighur who asked that her full name not be used. Her younger brother is serving a 20-year prison sentence for stealing a carton of cigarettes during the riots. "Talking about our sorrow might just increase it. So we swallow it up inside."

Fear is not unwarranted here. For years now, those caught talking to journalists have been questioned, monitored and sometimes detained indefinitely. More striking is that residents now say they cannot talk even with one another.

The Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs consider Xinjiang their homeland but now make

up only 46 percent of the region's population, after decades of government-sponsored migration by China's Han ethnic majority.

The riots started as a Uighur protest over a government investigation into a Uighur-Han brawl at a southern Chinese factory. Several days of violence brought the official death toll to 197, with 1,700 injured, though observers suspect the casualty count to be much higher. Most of the dead were Han, according to authorities. The government officially acknowledged detaining nearly 1,500 people after the riots. As of early March, Xinjiang had officially sentenced 198 people, with 25 death sentences. Of those 25, 23 were Uighur.

The events forced China's national and regional governments to address, at least superficially, taboo issues of ethnic conflict, discrimination and socioeconomic inequality. The central government in April named a different Communist Party secretary for Xinjiang, Zhang Chunxian, who promptly announced that he had "deeply fallen in love with this land." In May, the government announced a new development strategy to pour \$1.5 billion into the region. It also restored full Internet and text-messaging access to the region after limiting or blocking it entirely for 10 months.

The riots "left a huge psychic trauma on the minds of many people of all ethnicities. This fully reflects the great harm done to the Chinese autonomous region by 'splittist' forces," said Wang Baodong, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the United States.

The ability to confront what happened last July, and why, still eludes people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. White-knuckled, they hold their spoons above steaming bowls of mutton stew, poking nervously at the oily surface. They fiddle with their watchbands until they break. They repeat questions rather than answer them. They glance through doorways, distracted, and shift side to side in their chairs. Summer's full swelter has yet to arrive, but everyone starting to speak to a reporter begins to sweat. One man leaves the table six times in half an hour to rinse the perspiration from his face. He returns unrefreshed.

When asked what changes the riots had brought, Mehmet, a former schoolteacher who resigned last year because he opposed requirements that he teach his Uighur students primarily in Chinese, took a long glance around the room before pointing halfheartedly out the door. "They built a new highway overpass," he said.

Suspicion of fellow citizens is still common throughout China but seems especially acute here. Academics accept interviews only if they can avoid discussing the conflict's lingering effects. An apologetic professor backed out of a planned meeting after his supervisor discovered his plan, called him and threatened his job. A businessman said that he believed government security agents often trained as journalists, and asked how he could be sure that he would not be turned in.

"We're seeing increasingly intrusive modes of control over religious and cultural expression," said Nicholas Bequelin, a Hong Kong-based senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. "They live in fear of being overheard."

The Kadeer Trade Center is at the center of a protracted conflict. The Urumqi government said that compensation talks with tenants were still ongoing, and that it had moved the tenants to a nearby location. A spokesman for Kadeer, who now lives in Fairfax, said she had not been offered compensation.

Although the government says it is striving for stability, getting there is uncomfortable. On a single street near this city's main bazaar, four different types of uniformed police were on patrol one recent day—not counting, of course, an unknown number of plainclothes security guards. They marched haphazardly along the sidewalks, the different units so numerous that they sometimes collided. Late into the evening, they perched on rickety school desk chairs placed throughout the bazaar, watching. On the corner outside Xinjiang Medical University, armed police in riot gear peered out the windows of an olive green humvee or leaned on riot shields under the afternoon sun.

"It's quiet here on the surface," said Yu Xinqing, 35, a lifelong Han resident of Urumqi whose brother was killed by Uighurs during the riots. He now carries a knife with him everywhere, avoids Uighur businesses and rarely speaks with Uighur neighbors he previously considered friends. He says he is saving money to leave Xinjiang behind for good.

"We don't talk about these things, even within our families," he said. "But our hearts are overwhelmed; we hold back rivers and overturn the seas."

Still, every once in a while, when a resident is safely alone with a neutral observer, months' worth of stifled thinking tumbles out. That was the case for Ablat, a Uighur businessman who sells clothing near the main bazaar; he would not allow his last name to be mentioned. Ablat had been speaking in vague, evasive terms for three hours, and then—ensconced in his car, speeding north out of town—something finally released.

"Give us jobs, stop holding our passports hostage, and let us worship the way we want to," he said. "That would solve these problems. That is all it would take."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERT TABASH

• Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I wish to extend my thanks to Dr. Robert Tabash for dedicating his career to the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, Palestine. Thanks to his concern for the people of Palestine, Dr. Tabash has created a hospital that is truly an oasis of peace in the troubled region and is a shining example of humanitarian assistance.

Dr. Tabash's work to build an oasis of peace to serve mothers and babies in conflict-torn Palestine has not been an easy road. After serving as a staff physician beginning in 1971, Dr. Tabash was appointed the Director of Administration to the Holy Family Hospital in 1985. That same year the hospital was forced to close due to the Arab-Israeli conflict. After a 5-year renovation period, Dr. Tabash's vision finally came to life when the hospital was inaugurated. That same year, Dr. Tabash saw the first baby born in the new facility. Since, the hospital has successfully delivered over 50,000 newborns. With the only neonatal intensive care unit in the area, Holy Family Hospital has amazingly limited the mortality rate to around 2 percent, on par with Western hospitals and remarkably different