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No. 8

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Lord of history, lead our Senators above all irrelevancies and trivialities to a unity of passion and purpose. Create in them an elevated and refined patriotism that will make them eager to know and do Your will. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts receive Heaven's approval. In the awareness that "without a vision the people perish," give our lawmakers a fresh revelation of the United States of America. Also, keep ever before them the dream of a better world that is yet to be.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 16, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WELCH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2872, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, H.R. 2872, a bill to amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 to allow the Secretary of the Interior to issue electronic stamps under such Act, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as of today, over 200 million Americans remain on alert as heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures persist across the country. As far south as Texas, Americans are seeing snow, ice, and dan-

gerous road conditions and power outages by the hundreds of thousands.

On Friday, Governor Hochul declared a state of emergency for western New York and warned residents to stay off the roads. Of course, I might say, though, the cold did not stop the Buffalo Bills. Go Bills.

And, last week, Senator GILLIBRAND and I sent a "stand ready" letter to FEMA, urging them to remain at the ready to assist our State officials with whatever support they request.

Thankfully, snowfall in New York has slowed today compared to over the weekend, but we are not out of the woods yet. Yet another wave of lake-effect weather is set to pass through our State in the coming days.

My office will continue to remain in touch with State officials, and I urge everyone to continue to exercise caution.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, now, on the CR, over the weekend, Congressional leadership reached a bipartisan agreement on a clean extension of government funding until March 1 and March 8, which will prevent a government shutdown.

The focus of this week will be to pass this extension as quickly as we can. Time is of the essence. If we don't act soon, the government will run out of funding at midnight this Friday, January 19, just a few days away.

So, today, the Senate will take the first vote to move forward on a clean CR, putting the Senate on a path to pass the CR before Friday's deadline. If both sides continue to work in good faith, I am hopeful that we can wrap up work on the CR no later than Thursday.

The key to finishing our work this week will be bipartisan cooperation in both Chambers. You can't pass these bills without support from Republicans and Democrats in both the House and the Senate.

And passing a clean CR this week is important for two main reasons: First,

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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passing the CR, of course, will avert a harmful and unnecessary government shutdown. No reasonable Member on either side, Democrat or Republican, wants a government shutdown. Both sides recognize that a government shutdown would mean crushing delays to veterans programs; nutrition programs for women, infants, and children; delayed benefits for our military; and so much more.

Second, passing the CR will give our appropriators time to finish drafting all 12 bills to reflect our bipartisan agreement. Congressional leaders have already agreed to a top-line number that will protect critical priorities like housing, veterans' benefits, healthcare, nutrition programs, and more. We want to move forward as quickly as we can to turn this top-line number into legislation, but everyone knows we need more time.

Now while most Democrats and Republicans want to avoid a shutdown, a small group of hard-right extremists seem dead set on making a shutdown a reality. With little leverage to actually enact their agenda, these extremists have tried again and again to bully the Speaker, bully their own Republican colleagues, and bully the country into accepting their hard-right views. That is it. The only tactic the hard right has in its playbook is to bully everyone else into submission, just like Donald Trump does. And the reason is simple: Most Senators, most Congressmen—Democrat and Republican—do not accept that their draconian cuts will be good for America. So the only thing they can do is bully because they can't convince, they can't win over people by argument, so bullying seems to be their way to go.

Even now, the hard right, amazingly, is demanding that the Speaker walk away from the agreement that the four corners made on the appropriations top lines. That is simply ridiculous, as even many Republicans recognize, and it goes to show you how unserious, how incapable the hard right is of doing the hard work of governing.

But if the hard right's tactics in the House have proved one thing, it is that bullying almost never works—and it ain't working for them. Bullying didn't work during the default; it didn't work during previous shutdown threats; and it is certainly not going to work now.

I hope that both sides can continue working together this week to move forward with the CR quickly to prevent a government shutdown before the Friday deadline.

TAX FRAMEWORK

Mr. President, now on the tax framework, this morning, Senate Finance Chairman WYDEN and House Ways and Means Chairman SMITH announced a bipartisan, bicameral agreement on a tax framework that will significantly improve the lives of millions of working families and help Main Street businesses growing in today's economy. It has taken a lot of hard work to come up with this framework, and I applaud

the good work done by Chairman WYDEN, Chairman SMITH, and everyone on both sides who made this agreement possible.

I support this bipartisan tax framework because it makes important progress to expand the child tax credit, helps address our affordable housing crisis, and helps keep U.S. businesses competitive against the Chinese Communist Party. As everyone knows, it takes bipartisan support to get things done, so I hope our Republican Senate colleagues are willing to work with us to keep this process going.

Now, this tax package has a great many provisions, but there are two that I think distill why it is so important an achievement. The first number is 16 million; that is the number of children from low-income families who would benefit from this tax package's expansion of the child tax credit. It goes a good part of the way toward restoring full refundability to the CTC, and largest tax credits will go directly to families who earn the least. For instance, under this tax package, a family with three kids where one parent earns \$32,000 a year will receive almost a thousand dollars more from the CTC in the first year alone, and a single parent with two children earning \$13,000 part time would see their credit double, a gain of over \$1,500 in the first year. That is more money for parents to pay for groceries, diapers, baby formula, clothes, toiletries—the things parents absolutely need but, in many cases, struggle to afford.

Now, the second—the first number was 16 million—the second number of significance is 200,000. That would be the number of new affordable homes that will be made possible because of this agreement through the expansion of the low-income housing tax credit. I pushed very hard to make sure that strong, low-income housing tax credit provisions were included in this tax agreement. I made it public that omitting it would be unacceptable, and I could not support the package without it.

The housing shortage is one of the biggest issues we face in this country. It affects urban, suburban, and rural areas. It is one of the biggest issues we face in New York where we need to build more affordable housing.

The low-income housing tax credit is one of the most effective tools in existence to increase the supply of affordable housing, and this package will make this credit far more generous and far more easy to access.

So, once again, I commend Chair WYDEN and Chair SMITH for all of their hard work in making this framework possible.

Again, it will take bipartisan support in both the House and Senate if we want to take the next steps forward. I hope Members of both parties are willing to work with us on this package because there are many things in it that both sides can celebrate. It represents a great opportunity to help working

families, help Main Street businesses, and lower costs for people across the country.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. President, on the supplemental, as we continue to work to fund the government, Senate negotiators remain hard at work finalizing an agreement for a national security supplemental. As I have said repeatedly, it is a matter of the highest national urgency that we pass the supplemental. At stake is the security of our country, the security of our friends abroad—including Ukraine and Israel—and nothing less than the future of Western democracy. We cannot afford to let these issues go unaddressed.

Passing the supplemental is one of the hardest things the Senate has done in a very long time. But for the sake of our national security, of our friends abroad, of our fundamental values, and of the strength that this country is regarded in in the rest of the world, we must stay the course.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HONORING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, our Nation honored one of the most consequential lives in American history. The America in which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., labored for change was the same America in which I grew up.

I was fortunate to be raised by parents who believed deeply in equal rights, but the scourge of segregation was not unfamiliar in the places I spent my formative years.

As I have shared with some of our colleagues before, I was especially lucky to witness one of the most climatic moments of the civil rights movement as I was a congressional intern here in Washington. I remember stepping outside my office on August 28, 1963, and taking in the enormous crowds that had flocked to participate in the March on Washington. I remember looking down toward the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial beyond.

I was too far away to hear Dr. King's immortal words with my own ears, but I was proud to be a witness to that remarkable history he wrote that day and throughout his extraordinary life.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, now an entirely different matter, House and Senate negotiators worked hard and reached an agreement on top-line government funding levels for the current fiscal year, and work continues to deliver full-year appropriations through regular order. Shutting down the government, even part of it, would interrupt this important progress. That is why, today, the Senate will begin the process of passing a short-term extension of government funding to allow this work to continue.

I am grateful that the Speaker of the House was able to secure serious rollbacks on reckless spending, but it remains to be seen whether the Biden administration can get serious on its responsibility to provide for the common defense. For 3 straight years, the President has turned in budget requests with real dollar cuts to funding America's Armed Forces. Even a quick glance around the world shows how little we can afford to shortchange the men and women defending the United States and our interests. We need to take this responsibility seriously.

IRAN

Mr. President, now, on another matter, 3 years ago, I warned the Biden administration that it needed to take a tougher approach to growing threats from Iran and its terrorist proxies. I warned against removing the Houthis from the Terrorist Watchlist, and I called attention to how, even then, Iran was increasing its shipments of ever deadlier and longer range weapons to the terrorists in Yemen.

But from the beginning, the administration chose to meet Iranian aggression with accommodation. The President's team operated on a profoundly naive assessment of the threat that we face. They abandoned pressure and squandered leverage in an attempt to revive a failed nuclear deal.

They hectored regional partners under attack, as if their defensive actions against Houthi terrorists had provoked these Iranian proxies in the first place. And then they trumpeted the utterly fictional successes of their approach.

Remember how the President's National Security Advisor described the state of the world last September—just last September—in an incredibly timed essay in *Foreign Affairs*. Just weeks before Iran-backed terrorists would slaughter 1,200 Israelis on October 7, he claimed the United States had an “enhanced deterrence” to deter “further [Iranian] aggression” and that the Middle East was “quieter than it has been for decades.”

And 3 years in, the price of these delusions has become inescapably obvious. To the extent that President Biden sought detente with the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, he was woefully ill-advised about the nature of the Iranian regime. To the extent that this administration ever seriously sought to deter Iran and its proxies, their efforts have demonstrably failed.

So let's be absolutely clear. The United States is capable of destroying those who threaten our allies, our interests, and American lives. A global superpower is equipped to bring enormous force to bear against its enemies. But deterrence isn't just about capabilities. It is not enough for Iran to know that America has the means to demolish its military and its network of terrorists. No. Deterrence requires that our adversaries actually believe we are willing to use these capabilities.

It requires credibility. And when credibility is eroded, it is not easily restored.

It will be difficult for the Biden administration to convince Tehran and its agents that after 3 years spent scolding our partners for wanting to defend themselves from Houthi terrorist attacks, America now intends to do the same thing.

It will be difficult for the administration to convince our adversaries that, after years of bending over backwards to accommodate Iran and wringing our hands over the use of military force against its proxies, we are now prepared to respond directly against Iranian targets.

Restoring credible deterrence means identifying what our adversaries hold dear and proving we are willing to hold it at risk.

Now, I am certain, Mr. President, that there are things Tehran considers more precious than empty terrorist warehouses in Syria or Houthi radar systems in Yemen. Iran uses proxies precisely because they consider them expendable. Taking pains to avoid killing these proxies or targeting Iranian forces and interests themselves tells Tehran that its strategy is actually working.

President Biden owes it to the American people to explain how, exactly, he intends to compel Iran and its proxies to actually change their behavior.

He owes it to the Nation to start explaining how the stakes of conflict in the Middle East ripple across the world; how the challenges we face in the Red Sea, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific are all connected; and how the cost of failing to meet them compounds.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration is not alone in its failure to take its responsibility seriously. This afternoon, the Senate must take it upon ourselves to reject an attempt to degrade our Nation's credibility even further.

The resolution brought forward by Senator SANDERS is little more than performative leftwing politics. It is not, as our colleague would suggest, about authorizing a report on aid to Israel. It is not even about human rights. It is about tying the hands of a close ally locked in a necessary battle against savage terrorists.

It is a gift to the leftwing anti-Israel activists.

So colleagues who share a concern about the plight of innocent people in Gaza should set their attention on the Hamas terrorists who orchestrate their suffering—the terrorists who take hostages, steal humanitarian aid, and use their own citizens as human shields; the terrorists who go to loathsome extremes to imperil innocent human life.

America's ally Israel takes extraordinary risks to minimize civilian casualties. Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Iran's other proxies across the region go to extraordinary lengths to maximize senseless death. We must

not confuse one for the other. The distinction here is clear and boldfaced.

Any colleague considering a vote for the Sanders resolution ought to consider what message they would like to send to America's allies and partners facing shared threats around the world and what message they would like to send our adversaries who doubt our resolve.

Israel deserves America's firm support as it roots out terrorist killers and restores its security.

Soon, the Senate will have an opportunity to make necessary investments in our capacity to support Israel and other threatened partners from Ukraine to Taiwan or the Philippines. As the threats to our interests grow, so do the costs of defending them.

In just the time the Senate has been working on the national security supplemental, operational costs for U.S. forces in the Middle East have risen. As I have warned for weeks, using million-dollar missiles to defend against thousand-dollar drones strains an already insufficient inventory of long-range capabilities.

The supplemental is our chance to expand our capacity to meet the national security challenges we face. The American people deserve leaders who are willing to take these challenges seriously.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when is enough enough?

At the start of 2024, we find ourselves in another Presidential election cycle, and as we move closer to election day in November, we can expect political tensions to rise. But, as the new year begins, a rise in political violence threatens to overshadow the traditional Presidential process.

Across the country, at every level of government, we are experiencing a surge in violent threats against public officials and government workers. Some officials have been victims of swatting incidents, in which false 9-1-1 calls lead to law enforcement swarming the homes of targeted individuals. In other cases, officials have received death threats or bomb threats where they live or work, and in some tragic instances, violent threats have escalated into violent acts.

It should go without saying, but it is worth repeating: Political violence in furtherance of any cause—any cause—is unacceptable. But it is undeniable that the recent spike in violent threats and acts has one major source: the grievances of former President Trump.

Just over 3 years after President Trump called his supporters to Washington, DC, and directed them to this

Senate Chamber and Capitol Building, where they staged a violent insurrection, his calls for retribution against his perceived enemies continue on an almost daily basis. Recent victims have included the secretary of state in the State of Maine, the former speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives, and the employees of the Georgia secretary of state's office—all of whom were targets of swatting and violent threats. These individuals were targeted for their roles in upholding the lawful result of the 2020 Presidential election or for their involvement in the upcoming election. Many election workers at lower levels have also been threatened, especially women and people of color.

Just this morning, POLITICO published an article about the fears and concerns of local election workers and the conspiracy theories and threats they face. These threats deter Americans from engaging in civic life or even seeking public office.

The recent rise in political violence has not just affected those who run for office or help to run our elections; judges, jurors, and officers of the court have also faced threats. Just last week, Justice Arthur Engoron—the New York State judge presiding over the former President's civil fraud trial—had his home swarmed by police after someone called in a fake bomb threat. This occurred hours after Trump took to his now favorite social media platform, Truth Social, and called Judge Engoron “a Trump-hating judge.”

This came on the heels of similar swatting, targeting the homes of Jack Smith and Judge Tanya Chutkan—the special prosecutor pursuing criminal charges against the former President for election interference and the judge overseeing the case. The former President has repeatedly attacked both of these public servants by name.

Last August, Judge Chutkan received a voice mail saying:

If Trump doesn't get elected in 2024, we're coming to kill you, so tread lightly.

On Christmas Eve, Trump called Special Counsel Smith “deranged” and claimed he was one of President Biden's “misfits and thugs.” The very next day, the special counsel's home was targeted with a swatting call.

The justices of the State Supreme Courts of Colorado and Wisconsin, along with staff, jurors, and prosecutors, have also faced threats due to their involvement in the former President's legal case. All of these individuals have been targeted simply because they continue to fulfill their duties to uphold the law.

All the while, former President Trump has refused to condemn the actions of his supporters, and at times, he clearly encourages it. Yet we rarely hear any of our Republican colleagues criticize their de facto leader for his public threats of violence or his encouragement of his most extreme supporters.

Threats of violence and violence are antithetical to our democracy, what-

ever their political source. In a free country, there are countless ways for people to legitimately and peacefully react and respond to political events and outcomes with which they disagree. People can vote as they choose. They can encourage their fellow citizens to do likewise. They can organize and advocate whether by knocking on doors, speaking at rallies, or posting on social media. They can peaceably assemble and protest public officials and the policies they pursue.

In the United States, these kinds of political activities are not merely tolerated; they are encouraged, and they are protected by the Constitution and the force of law. But we cannot as a nation tolerate, let alone encourage, threats of political violence by anyone, including the former President of the United States.

The recent rise in political violence marks a renewed attempt to use violence and the threat of violence to intimidate public officials, election workers, and our fellow American voters.

Sadly, the specter of political violence is not new. In 1968—another Presidential election year, one marred by heinous acts of violence—Robert Kennedy gave remarks the day after Martin Luther King was assassinated. He spoke about the mindless menace of violence in America, and he quoted Abraham Lincoln, who more than a century before wrote:

Among free men, there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet; and [those] who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost.

Today, I am calling on my colleagues in both political parties to publicly condemn the state of violence which is dominating in this country. We have come to accept it as commonplace. Shame on us in that regard. If this true democracy is to succeed, we all have to speak out against violence on both sides of the equation. We must stand together in opposing violence and threats of violence. Our democracy is strong, but it is only as strong as the people who participate in it, who protect it, and who serve it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are all returning to a snowy Washington, DC, but it never ceases to amaze me, when I come back to the Nation's Capitol from home, back in Texas, the disconnect between what people are focused on back home—namely, their jobs, their family, and, well, football. That didn't turn out so well for us this

weekend. But the mainstream media and, of course, social media, which amplifies what people are talking about or the message that they want to convey—the so-called influencers, which are, really, in some instances, no more than propagandists—and even our foreign adversaries are engaging in a non-stop battle to control the narrative here in Washington, DC, on a variety of issues, including the terrorist attack that occurred in Israel on October 7 of last year.

Yesterday marked 100 days since Hamas terrorists murdered more than 1,200 Israelis and took about 240 hostages. I traveled to Israel with several of my Senate colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee last week, and we witnessed the grief and the fear that has gripped the Israeli people over the last few months. It was a familiar feeling because it seemed very much like where the American people were 3 months after the attacks of 9/11/2001, when al-Qaida killed 3,000 Americans.

In Tel Aviv, photos of the hostages who were still being held captive by Hamas lined the walkway. The photo of a 9-month-old baby held hostage literally stopped me in my tracks, wondering who would it be, what kind of person would take a 9-month-old baby and hold it hostage.

In the face of every person I spoke with, from families of hostages to senior government officials, there was, understandably, a deep sense of shock, mourning, and anger. Again, it reminded me of how we felt after 9/11. We were grieving, we were shocked, we were angry, and we were absolutely committed to holding those responsible accountable.

Our shared sense of purpose extended far beyond the borders of the United States. Our friends and allies around the world said: We have America's back. And they have supported our mission to destroy the al-Qaida threat.

That is exactly the kind of response you would expect when a terrorist group viciously attacks a friend—solidarity. Sadly, Israel has not received the overwhelming support that our country did in the wake of 9/11. In the more than 100 days since this war began, Israel has been criticized for defending itself. It has been villainized for going after the terrorist group that murdered, raped, and kidnapped its people.

This is not a view just held by a few people. Anti-Israeli rhetoric has spread like wildfire across social media. It has taken root at elite college campuses and even here in the Halls of Congress.

This past weekend, we saw the latest chapter in blaming the victim, as thousands of protesters gathered in downtown Washington, DC, to demand a ceasefire in Gaza. I would say a ceasefire would be great, but there is no guarantee Hamas won't continue to kill innocent men, women, and children. So it is just not feasible.

Protesters chanted: “Ceasefire now.” “End the war in Gaza.” They carried

signs that said “Free Palestine” and “Let Gaza live.” They accused Israel of being an apartheid government and outrageously said the United States was supporting genocide.

Again, this was not a small protest. Thousands of people lined the streets of our Nation’s Capital, and countless others protested around the world as part of a “Global Day of Resistance,” as it was called.

I find it deeply disturbing to see this view shared by so many because it is completely divorced from reality. These protesters have the entire problem completely backward. Hamas is not a victim; Hamas is the aggressor in every possible sense, along with its state sponsor, Iran.

While we were in Israel, my colleagues and I were shown footage of the October 7 attack, which was captured by Hamas terrorists. In other words, they were taking video of themselves killing innocent men, women, and children. They intentionally filmed all of these atrocities they committed so the entire world could see. But what we saw affirms that these are not victims in any sense—Hamas, that is. They are murderers. They are rapists. They are kidnappers, and they are terrorists.

Hamas carried out the most gruesome atrocities I have ever seen, and I hope to never see those again. But we cannot, under any set of circumstances, allow them to be viewed as the victim in this war.

This is not only Israeli blood on the hands of Hamas. Hamas is also responsible for immense suffering by civilians living in Gaza. Hamas raises vast amounts of money from the Palestinian people and outside donors, but that money does next to nothing to support a better quality of life for Palestinians. It isn’t invested in schools, hospitals, or housing. Instead, it is used to arm Hamas’s wartime operations.

This terrorist group spends vast amounts of money building tunnels beneath the streets of Gaza—some 500 kilometers. It is a virtual city under a city. It allows it to hoard weapons. We literally saw manufacturing facilities for weapons and ammunitions in the tunnels. And, of course, it is used to keep food and fuel and to shield themselves from the violence above ground. Unfortunately, these tunnels are also used to hide the hostages, more than 100 of whom are still in Hamas captivity.

Hamas builds these tunnels beneath hospitals and schools and other vulnerable locations in order to give credence to Hamas’s lie that it is the victim, not the aggressor.

Here in the United States, we are thousands of miles away from this war. Hamas didn’t invade our neighborhoods. They didn’t murder and kidnap our family or friends. And they aren’t launching rockets that threaten us each night. But just because we aren’t living with the daily realities of this war doesn’t mean that we can be di-

vorced from it. War is not just a battle of brute force; it is also a contest for public opinion.

Hamas goes to great lengths to shift the narrative and build sympathy. It is not a new strategy, but it is deeply disappointing to see how many Hamas sympathizers are found on American soil. It is disheartening that scores of Americans are lapping up Hamas’s lies. By claiming that Israel is the aggressor, they are playing directly into these terrorists’ hands.

We know war is ugly. It is tragic. It hurts innocent people and punishes the most vulnerable. William Tecumseh Sherman, a Civil War general said:

War is hell. You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it.

The realities of this war are nothing short of devastating. I understand the desire for the violence to end, and I hope and pray that it will soon. But we must remember this can only happen when the Hamas threat is defeated.

The ultimate goal of Hamas, along with its state sponsor Iran, is to end the Jewish State, to wipe Israel off the map. That is the only risk of genocide in this war.

We have a responsibility to call out and correct the falsehoods and mischaracterizations that are spreading in our own country. We have a responsibility to do our best to inform the American people about the facts and to make sure they understand who is the aggressor and who is the victim. And, in the end, I believe we have a duty to stand with our ally Israel as it does what is needed to root out the terrorist threats in its own country.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate Religious Freedom Day, recognized by Presidential proclamation since 1993. The day is timed to honor the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom on January 16, 1786. This statute became the basis of the First Amendment’s protection of religious freedom for all Americans.

I was inspired to offer these thoughts by the moving address on anti-Semitism delivered in this Chamber by Majority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER a few weeks ago. His powerful comments addressed the fears felt today by so many Jewish Americans, the connection between those fears and the tragic global history of anti-Semitism, and how Americans can come together to reject religious bigotry against Jews.

As a person who takes my own Catholic faith seriously, it is important to listen to those who feel discriminated against due to their religion. During our history, Catholics have often been targeted by groups like the Ku Klux Klan. I am fortunate to say that I have never faced anti-Catholic bigotry, but those who haven’t faced religious discrimination need to

be sensitive to the real fears of those who face it every day. All of us are God’s children—brothers and sisters meant to dwell together in unity.

The final part of Senator SCHUMER’s address regarding what we can do as Americans to reject anti-Semitism or any discrimination based on religious beliefs reminded me of the principles imbedded in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and I am convinced that part of the solution to the rise in anti-Semitism is to go back to first principles and remind ourselves of the values that we have long proclaimed as Americans.

The Virginia statute was first drafted by Thomas Jefferson in 1777. Its purpose was simple and powerful—to declare that a person could freely choose whether and how to worship and would neither be preferred nor punished for that choice. This was at stark odds with prevailing English practice, in which the Church of England was the state-sponsored church, and other Christian sects and non-Christian religions were discouraged, punished, or outlawed. Official discrimination against Jews in English law persisted well into the 19th century, and life in the American Colonies of England before the Revolutionary War showed the continuation of this preferential treatment for certain religious practices over others.

The operative clause of the Virginia statute is as follows:

[N]o man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to protest, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

We complain that things move slowly in the U.S. Senate. This is not a new complaint about legislative bodies. It took 9 years for the Virginia General Assembly to take up and pass Jefferson’s statute, and the State legislative leader who finally gained passage of the measure was Madison. Madison witnessed discrimination against Baptist ministers in Virginia by those associated with the Church of England, and he believed deeply that religious liberty needed protection.

The Virginia General Assembly passed the statute on January 16, 1786, in a building at the corner of 14th and East Cary Streets in downtown Richmond, a few blocks from where I live. Today, that site is a small museum, the First Freedom Center, highlighting the idea of religious freedom and how it became a bedrock principle of American law.

Madison was soon charged with drafting the Bill of Rights to the American Constitution. He used the Virginia statute as the basis for the religious protections of the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

The statute also informed article VI, clause 3 of the Constitution:

[N]o religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

These provisions demonstrate a powerful intent to form an America where all can worship as they please without fear. The meaning of these clauses was well understood at the time.

Early in his first term as President, George Washington corresponded with the Jewish community of Newport, RI. In his beautiful letter from August 1790—he had been President a little bit over a year—he described an America that was not merely tolerant of religious pluralism but where all could equally claim the blessings of citizenship. Here is what he wrote:

All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens.

He concluded with a wish specifically directed at American Jews:

May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.

“[A]nd there shall be none to make him afraid.” This is our birthright as Americans. Those of us who take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States have pledged to act in way to make these words real. We have to guard, protect, and celebrate—not merely tolerate—a society where people of different religious faiths can live in the same neighborhoods, attend the same schools, work side by side, and do so as friends.

When we live up to this promise, it is not only for the benefit of those living here. There are many places in the world where this protection of religious freedom is nonexistent, barely possible to even imagine. Yet, if people around the world can see America as a place where people of different faiths live together in respect, equality, and friendship, they can at least believe in that as a possibility for their own societies.

We need a recommittal to the first freedom—religious liberty.

While comprehensive statistics on religiously motivated harassment are not complete, there is a disturbing spike in anti-Semitism as well as harassment directed at Muslims or people of Arab descent, who are targeted either for religious or ethnic reasons. We have seen Jewish students harassed on campuses in recent months, following upon horrific violence directed against Jews in Charlottesville in 2017 and Pittsburgh in 2018. We have seen the bigotry-fueled murder of a 6-year-old Muslim boy in Illinois and the heartless shooting of three Palestinian college students in

Burlington—Mr. President, the State you represent—just within the last few months.

One troubling form of discrimination is targeting Americans for events occurring elsewhere in the world. In Williamsburg, VA, just a few weeks ago, a Jewish group was denied the ability to display a menorah at a local festival because organizers claimed that they didn’t “want to make it seem like we’re choosing a side” in the ongoing war in Gaza. American Jews celebrating Hanukkah here should not be blocked from a celebration of the season because of a war thousands of miles away. Arab and Muslim Americans have long faced fear and discrimination because of the ignorant assumption that the horrific actions of extremists in the Middle East, operating on the margins of society, somehow reflect the views of an entire faith or community.

That we have strong and diverse views about events happening around the world is natural. Events in the Middle East have long caused heartbreak, and the current war in Israel-Gaza is tragic. But events elsewhere give no cause for bigotry or violence against fellow Americans.

Organizations monitoring hate crimes have seen significant spikes in attacks on American Jews and American Muslims and Arabs since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7. At the very time when we should be showing the world that there is a different way, that religious pluralism can actually work, we are seeing tears in the social fabric we have worked so hard for so long to stitch together.

While religious bigotry can affect any group, recent statistics indicate that the most frequent targets in America today are Jews. Jews make up only 2.4 percent of the American population, but statistics in recent years have shown that the overwhelming majority of hate crimes committed out of religious animus—nearly 60 percent—are driven by anti-Semitism. Instances of anti-Semitism between October 7 and January 7 increased by 360 percent over the same period a year ago. We also see rising anti-Semitism around the world. And increasing anti-Semitism is often an early warning sign of the fragility of a democracy.

My conversations in recent months with Jewish friends and acquaintances have been saddening. Some are worried about their own safety and, even more painfully, the safety of their children and grandchildren. Some even wonder whether they might need to leave this country one day, just as Jews have been forced out of many other countries over time due to bigotry.

One expressed to me the powerful feeling of wanting to belong to the American family, to be truly welcomed and safe after a history of global anti-Semitism but now feeling pushed aside. He recounted standing up for so many excluded groups over the course of his life but sadly wondered why more are not standing up for Jews now.

Another friend recounted growing up in a mixed household with a Jewish father who would often say, “The world has always hated Jews, and you think you are accepted here? You’ll learn different one day.” She told me that she and her siblings would roll their eyes at their dad when he would say this when they were kids. Now she says, “For the first time in my life, I begin to understand what he meant.”

A third friend told me something that really shocked me. Some family members are deciding to remove the mezuzahs placed on the doors of their homes. A mezuzah is a small cylinder with a sacred Hebrew text inside, placed on the door of a home and sometimes on interior doors as well, to provide a blessing and protection to those within. My friend told me that it is an obvious—perhaps too obvious—sign that it is a Jewish household. So while this tradition dates back centuries, people are tempted to avoid it just out of fear that the presence of a mezuzah may lead them to be targeted for discrimination.

I researched this a bit and found that my friend’s fear was well-founded. There are many examples of people facing harassment or having their homes vandalized merely because of their mezuzah. In 2022, for example, Jewish students at the University of Indiana found that their mezuzahs were being stolen or defaced. This instance followed others on or near the campus in which swastikas and other anti-Semitic phrases appeared.

Senator SCHUMER laid out the prevalence of anti-Semitism throughout global history. We have never been immune to it here even as we profess the freedom of each person to worship as they choose. So how should we deal with this blight on our values and recommit to respecting the religious beliefs of each person?

First, let’s take pride in our tradition of religious freedom and celebrate it today and every day. It has made our society rich in faith traditions. By being authentically who we are, we can educate each other about religious beliefs and grow deeper in our own spiritual understanding.

I am a better Christian because of things that I have learned from friends who are Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and from those who have deep ethical and spiritual grounding, though not expressed as religious faith at all. And I hope that living my own Christianity may have a positive influence on others’ spiritual beliefs as well.

Second, let’s get better at tracking hate crimes and other forms of discrimination committed on the basis of religion. We passed the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer NO HATE Act. Heather Heyer was the very, very remarkable young woman who was killed by neo-Nazis in Charlottesville in August 2017. I was proud to cosponsor that bill. We passed it in 2021 to provide training and implementation grants to

help law enforcement agencies report and respond to hate crimes.

This will solve gaps in reporting. Eighty percent of law enforcement agencies participating in national crime databases reported no hate crimes between 1996 and 2020. This is likely a serious underreporting problem rather than an indication that hate crimes don't happen. Better measurement alone will not solve the problem, but the failure to accurately measure religious discrimination renders improvement very difficult.

Third, let's commit to increasing education about religious discrimination throughout our history and the reasons why America embraced the guarantee of religious freedom as our Nation was founded. I am gratified, for example, that Virginia has made education about the Holocaust an important part of our social studies curriculum. In a recent hearing on anti-Semitism before the HELP Committee, a key fact that emerged was just how poorly informed many are about this topic. And the plethora of misinformation spread by irresponsible social media platforms makes the need for better education even more urgent.

If we just count on the criminal justice system to deal with this topic, we will never be successful. We need to inculcate a curiosity about spirituality and a love for religious pluralism in our young people. This is not about indoctrination; it is about respect.

Fourth, let's embrace a whole-of-government response to anti-Semitism by working to implement the recommendations contained in the "U.S. National Strategy to Counter Anti-Semitism" announced by the Biden administration in June 2023. This comprehensive approach is built around four key pillars: education, safety, fighting the normalization of anti-Semitic words and actions, and building solidarity. It can be a model for similar work at the State and local levels. We can do more in Congress and in communities across America to make this strategy visible and meaningful.

Finally, there are acts that we can each take as individuals to show we respect the religious beliefs of all. There have been powerful examples throughout history of actions of solidarity against anti-Semitism.

I am pleased to partner with my Republican colleague Senator BILL HAGERTY of Tennessee to recognize forgotten heroes of the Holocaust with the Congressional Gold Medal. These were diplomats from over two dozen countries who took grave personal risks to help Jews escape Nazi-occupied Europe. Their actions show us the power of an individual to be a light in the darkness, to say: I am not Jewish, but I see what is happening to Jews, and I will do what I can to help.

When students at the University of Indiana confronted anti-Semitism on campus in 2022, they came up with a novel solution. Noting that the desecration of mezuzahs made Jewish stu-

dents afraid to display them, a campus organization produced and then distributed mezuzahs across the campus to Jewish students and non-Jewish students alike. They reasoned that a massive display of mezuzahs on the community's doors would send a message of solidarity and render it less likely that a Jewish student would fear being targeted for bigotry.

I will follow the creative idea of the Indiana students by installing a mezuzah at the entrance to my home. I want to send a message to Jews and all people that they will always be welcome. I won't put Hebrew Scripture inside of the mezuzah because I don't feel that, as a Catholic, I should appropriate that particular religious tradition, but I will put these words on a small message inside: "None shall be afraid"—echoing the letter George Washington wrote more 230 years ago. That message applies not just to American Jews but to all who seek to live in harmony with others of diverse spiritual views.

I encourage others to follow the inspiration of these young people. Find a mezuzah at a local synagogue or Judaica shop and install it on the door of your home. Place within it a message of hope and acceptance—Washington's words or the First Amendment or another message meaningful to you. Or take other steps to demonstrate that you celebrate our religious freedom and offer welcome to all. Stand together with those of all spiritual traditions against forces that would divide or harm us. By doing so, let's move closer to the ideal that America professed at our founding.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined today, Senator SANDERS be recognized to make a motion to discharge S. Res. 504; and that if the motion is made and upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote in relation to the motion to discharge; further, that the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to H.R. 2872 ripen upon disposition of the motion to discharge.

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

Mr. DURBIN. For the information of the Senate, Senator SANDERS had a flight delay and is still expected to make the motion to discharge his resolution and speak prior to this evening's votes. Senators should expect votes to start at approximately 6:45 p.m.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from South Carolina.

ISRAEL

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I want to speak a few minutes on the business before the Senate here. Apparently, S. Res. 504 will be taken up in about an hour or so. And this resolution basically requires the Secretary of State to submit a report to the Foreign Relations Committees of the House and Senate regarding human rights practices and violations against the State of Israel regarding their operations in Gaza.

I can only imagine how this is playing in the Middle East. I can only imagine the joy that terrorist groups throughout the world have that we are even talking about such a proposal.

The question, I think, for this body—certainly, for me—is, what was October 7? Was it just a continuation of a tit for tat between Israel and Hamas, or was it an effort by Hamas—a terrorist organization under United States law—an effort to kill innocent civilians in Israel at a rate we haven't seen since the Holocaust?

I just got back. I would urge everybody in the body to go over there and take some time to visit the kibbutz—the kibbutzes in question, where Hamas came en masse, took over kibbutzes, cut the heads of children off, slaughtered people in front of their parents and their children, committed atrocities on par with the Nazis, if not beyond, and recorded them for posterity. So the response is, the U.S. Senate is going to ask for a report about how Israel is conducting military operations. Wow.

Again, to the terrorists who are emboldened, maybe, by this discussion—this is going to go down in flames. The Senate is going to reject this big time. And here's why: I think most people—at least on my side—see October 7 as Pearl Harbor on steroids.

What would happen after Pearl Harbor if some Senator or Congressman did something like this to America?

Did anybody in America believe that the response after Pearl Harbor was anything but total war?

The Japanese Empire and Nazi Germany were in league with Mussolini in Italy to destroy the world as we know it. A surprise attack against our forces on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, awakened this country, and we embarked on "a noble crusade." I think as General Eisenhower—eventually President Eisenhower—described, in destroying the Nazi regime and Imperial Japan. Nobody during those times would have suggested anything like this, because the only way you could

destroy those regimes was to destroy the infrastructure around the regimes.

The problem I have with this—not only does it empower the terrorists, it is the most tone-deaf thing maybe in the history of the Senate—is that it ignores the fact that Hamas has tunnels under hospitals, under schools. They use civilians as human shields. They routinely violate the law of war—and there is nothing in here about that. So all I can say is that the Senate will reject this idea.

And to the left, what are you thinking? To the people who go in and try to interrupt cancer treatments in New York at a cancer hospital, what are you thinking?

A ceasefire with Hamas only allows Hamas to regroup. Do you not see Hamas for who it is? It is a terrorist organization. They are religious Nazis.

They are not taking up the cause of the Palestinian people. They are abusing the Palestinian people probably greater than anybody. A Hamas spokesperson said a few weeks ago that there will be another October 7, another October 7, and another October 7.

Probably the biggest mistake Israel made was withdrawing from Gaza, because when they did, the Palestinians took over.

To the Palestinians who want to live in peace with Israel, Hamas throws them off the roofs of buildings in Gaza.

So we are dealing with the most barbaric organizations in the history of the world who are bent on destroying the Jewish people, are calling for attacks on the United States, and we have a resolution in front of us asking the Secretary of State to investigate the Government of Israel for war crimes.

You talk about upside down and backwards.

Just having been back from Israel, I can assure you the IDF is spending more time trying to protect innocent Palestinians than Hamas. What is odd about this whole thing is that Hamas is doing everything they can to expose civilians to military action, and Israel is trying—I think in a reasonable way—to lessen the exposure.

What do you call a group of people that build tunnels under hospitals and have command infrastructure under a hospital? You call them bloodthirsty terrorists who are trying to prey on the rules that exist in the law of war. By being under the hospital and the schoolhouse and firing rockets from apartment buildings, they have militarized these locations.

So here's what I would tell our friends in Israel: This effort to have you investigated will fail in the U.S. Senate. Keep doing what you need to do to make sure there is no more October 7s. Make sure that Hamas, as we know it, is destroyed. Do the best you can to protect civilians who are in harm's way.

A little bit about Gaza: From the time you are born, you are taught to kill the Jews. The most radicalized na-

tion on the planet, I would say, is Gaza, and a close second would be the West Bank.

When Germany and Japan were destroyed by military force, it took a generation to change the culture. So the Prime Minister of Israel says his goal is to demilitarize and deradicalize. Well, the way you demilitarize is you destroy Hamas as a military power. They have, I think, about 24 brigades.

If we end this conflict with their military capability still standing, we will have made a huge mistake.

The idea of anything but unconditional surrender in World War II was laughable. We used two nuclear bombs, and that is what was required to get Japan to surrender. So when you look back in history, the invasion of Japan that was being planned could have resulted in up to 1 million casualties of American forces. We brought that war to conclusion by using two atomic bombs that eventually allowed unconditional surrender. Anything less than unconditional surrender in World War II would have been a mistake.

Anything short of destroying Hamas militarily would be a mistake for the ages. If Hamas is still standing militarily after this attack of October 7, we will all pay a heavy price.

The world is watching.

To the world: If you see Israel as the bad guy here, you are missing a lot. There is no moral equivalency in play. Hamas goes out of its way to make sure civilians are killed in large numbers. That is part of their strategy, to require Israel to use military force in a way to heighten the likelihood of death by integrating their military infrastructure with civilian infrastructure.

So we will have a vote here soon. This resolution will fail. But the idea behind this resolution is scary to me.

You need to go to Israel and get briefed about what happened on October 7—what happened to the women, what happened to the children, and what is happening to the hostages. If you go and have that briefing and you believe that the only response—and if you believe anything less than total war to destroy Hamas is required, I would be surprised.

What would we do if this happened to us? What would we do to any terrorist group or government that brought about such atrocities against the American people?

We would hunt them down. We would make sure they could never do this to us again. That is exactly what Israel has to do.

It will be a long time before the populations of Gaza and the West Bank are going to be capable, I believe, of living in true peace with Israel, because if you have been taught from the time you were born and all through your life to hate somebody and to learn math by the following: "If you had 10 Jews and you killed 6, how many would you have left?" it is going to be a tall order to change that population.

But here is the good news: We have seen from Germany and Japan that it

can change, but it is going to take a lot of effort. I am willing to help the people in the West Bank and Gaza once Hamas has been destroyed. I am hopeful we can do a deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel in normalizing and effectively putting an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I believe Iran is the root of all evil here and that this attack was partly due to stopping the normalization efforts between Saudi Arabia and Israel. I have been supporting the efforts of the Biden administration, and I want to publicly thank them for continuing to push. I will do all I can as a Republican to help President Biden bring about the normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel. That would isolate Iran, and it would effectively end the Arab-Israeli conflict. One of the benefits of that deal would be to give the Palestinian people a better future.

This resolution is not only off base; it is dangerous. It is doing harm. It sends absolutely the wrong signal at the wrong time.

So, to the people who believe this is a good idea for the United States to launch an investigation of Israel as a potential war criminal after October 7, you have learned very little from history. The proper response by Israel is to destroy Hamas. The problem Israel has in that task is that Hamas is trying to make sure Israel kills as many innocent people as possible. Therein lies their dilemma. So this is a horribly bad idea.

To the American people, put yourselves in the shoes of Israel: an attack, barbaric in nature, that is designed to destroy you. Hamas's goal is not to liberate the Palestinian people; it is to kill the Jews. Hamas's goal is not to bring about a better life for the Palestinian people but to destroy the lives of the Jewish people.

They are religious Nazis. If you don't believe me, listen to them. They will not hide their agenda. They celebrate it. The SS tried to hide their war crimes. They tried to rebury bodies and destroy the concentration camps, but they were unable to hide their crimes. Hamas filmed their crimes. They want you to see what they were willing to do to babies and to women.

The question for the world is, What is the right response?

The right response, ladies and gentlemen, is, when you see evil, confront it. When you deal with people who are willing to destroy children or to rape daughters in front of the mother and father, you need to destroy them.

So, not only will this resolution fail, I believe the U.S. Senate will ensure that Israel has the latitude it needs to destroy not only an enemy of the Israeli people—Hamas—but the enemy of mankind itself.

I look forward to voting this resolution down, and I will be coming up with one of my own to try to correct the record.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—S. RES. 504

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, under section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, I move to discharge the Committee on Foreign Relations from further consideration of S. Res. 504.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to discharge from the Committee on Foreign Relations, S. Res. 504, a resolution requesting information on Israel's human rights practices pursuant to section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the vote: Senator SANDERS for up to 25 minutes, Senator MERKLEY for up to 5 minutes, and Senator CARDIN for up to 5 minutes.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me apologize to my colleagues for being late. It turns out today was not a great day to travel by plane. I thank the leadership for delaying the vote as well.

We will soon be voting on a resolution requesting information on Israel's human rights practices under section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act.

There has been some confusion as to what this resolution does and does not do. I would like to say a few words about why it is critical that this resolution come to the floor, why it is imperative that this resolution be passed, imperative that we have this debate and recorded vote, and why Congress must have the information requested in this resolution.

Very sensibly, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires that any security assistance or military equipment provided by the United States of America to any country must be used in line with internationally recognized human rights. This is not a radical idea and something I hope that we all agree with. This act prohibits assistance to any government that engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations.

This is U.S. law established over 50 years ago—not a new idea. The act also provides Congress with several oversight tools to ensure that this law is followed. One such tool is section 502B(c), which allows Congress to direct the State Department to provide information on the human rights

record of any country—any country—receiving U.S. military assistance.

That is what this resolution does, in line with 50-year-old existing law. It directs the State Department to provide any credible information it may have on potential violations of internationally recognized human rights by Israel in its military campaign in Gaza.

It focuses on the denial of the right to life caused by indiscriminate or disproportionate military operations as well as by restrictions on humanitarian access.

It also asks for information on steps the United States has taken to limit civilian risk in this war, a certification that the Leahy laws are being fully applied, and a summary of the arms and munitions provided to Israel since October 7.

This is a simple request for information. That is all this resolution is about. It does not alter aid to Israel in any way; it simply requests a report on how U.S. aid is being used. This is a very modest, commonsense proposal, and, frankly, it is hard for me to understand why anyone would oppose it.

So we will soon be voting on a very simple question: Do we support asking the State Department for information on whether human rights violations may have occurred using U.S. assistance in Israel's military campaign? That is it. That is what this resolution is about. It is noncontroversial, and it should be passed in large numbers. This is not the case today. We don't have the information.

The State Department will provide a report. The information requested in this resolution is straightforward to provide—not hard for the State Department—and it is critical to congressional oversight. The State Department should have it readily available, as required under current U.S. law and policy. Further, in the highly unlikely event the 30-day deadline is not met by the State Department, the law allows Congress to pass a measure continuing aid. After the report is received, Congress may then consider any changes it deems necessary for security assistance to the country in question. Any such resolution must pass both Houses of Congress and be signed by the President.

But, again, what we are voting on today is simply a request for information. Let me say a few words as to why this resolution is necessary, and these rather horrific photographs behind me I think say it all.

First, it is necessary because of the scale of the destruction in Gaza, the indiscriminate nature of the military campaign, the humanitarian catastrophe that is now occurring, and the limits on humanitarian access—food, water, medical supplies, and fuel.

Second, because of the extensive use of U.S. weapons in attacks that have killed thousands of civilians. Much of the destruction that has taken place in Gaza has been done with U.S. weapons.

Thirdly, I am concerned about the implications of some of the very ex-

treme statements and unclear intentions coming out of the Netanyahu government.

(Mr. WARNOCK assumed the Chair.)

It has been more than 100 days since this war began with the horrific Hamas terrorist attack which killed 1,200 innocent men, women, and children in Israel, and which took more than 200 hostages, over 100 of whom are still cruelly being held in captivity as of today.

While there is no question in my mind that Israel has the right to defend itself and go to war against Hamas, who started this terrible situation, Israel does not have the right to go to war against the entire Palestinian people, innocent men, women, and children in Gaza. Tragically, that is what we are seeing right now.

As we all know, the military campaign being waged by the rightwing Netanyahu government has led to massive destruction and widespread civilian harm. This has been far and away the most intensive bombing campaign of the 21st century. As President Biden has said repeatedly and the press and human rights monitors have exhaustively documented, this bombardment has been largely indiscriminate.

The results of this bombing campaign have been catastrophic, and I underline the word "catastrophic."

Since October 7, the start of the war, over 24,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli bombs and over 60,000 have been injured and wounded. Seventy percent of these victims are women and children, and it is believed that thousands more victims lie under the rubble of destroyed buildings in Gaza.

Since the beginning of this war, 1.9 million Palestinian men, women, and children have been driven from their homes. That is 85 percent—85 percent of the total population of Gaza has been forced out of their homes. Where are they going? They have been driven here. They have been driven there. They do not even know today whether they are ever going to be able to return to their homes. These are impoverished people who have no idea as to what their future is or will be.

Despite the sharing of coordinates with Israeli forces, 40 United Nations facilities have sustained direct hits, 61 U.N. installations have suffered collateral damage, and 150 U.N. workers have been killed—150 U.N. workers have been killed.

United Nations reports that over 234,000 housing units have been damaged and more than 46,000 homes completely destroyed in Gaza, amounting to nearly 70 percent—70 percent—of the housing stock, a figure confirmed by academic analysis of satellite radar data. That means—and this is rather an incredible reality—that means that the destruction of Gaza after 100 days has surpassed the destruction of Dresden during World War II, where half the homes in that city were destroyed, and is beyond the damage in dozens of