

violence affects mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, and whole communities on both sides.

Some people call Bint Jubail a Hezbollah stronghold—and I understand that. But 15,000 of my constituents call it their hometown. In fact, Dearborn, MI is home to the Bint Jubail Cultural Center that provides sort of a home away from home for many families.

Tragically, many Michigan families, their relatives, and their loved ones are trapped in Bint Jubail at this moment. They are caught in heavy fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, and people are dying on both sides. Today I pray for them and grieve with their families.

The lucky ones were able to get out—such as Rania Horani from Dearborn who was vacationing with her family in Bint Jubail when the fighting broke out. Fortunately, Rania was evacuated, but she spoke to the Associated Press about this terrifying experience. She said:

You're waiting, you're scared, you don't know if you are going to die. But you have to get out because you're going to die either from starvation, fear, stress, or a bomb. Thank God we're [in Cyprus].

We share that sentiment.

But the tragedy continues for hundreds of others stuck in Bint Jubail right now. The State Department must not stop the evacuations until every American and their family is safely out of Lebanon.

Last evening I spoke with one of the assistant Secretaries of State about American citizens and their family members who are still there. And I appreciate the attention of the assistant Secretary and of the Embassy, but we can not stop the ships.

We can not stop the rescue missions until all Americans and their families can come home. Too many people are still stuck there.

On the Israeli side, there is also too much destruction and loss of life. I understand how they must feel. Thousands of Americans fear for their families. Thousands of people in Michigan, friends of mine, hundreds of Michigan teenagers were evacuated in the middle of a summer trip to Israel because they were close to Hezbollah rocket attacks. I know their families and the fear of their moms and dads about whether their children would come home safely from a summer trip.

Brandon Lebowitz, a student at West Bloomfield High School, was a few miles away from the bombings in Tiberius. He talked about his harrowing experience:

We saw the missiles hitting the city and the smoke and we heard them from across the sea. We were pretty close to the missiles exploding.

I know how I would feel if that were my son.

Innocent Americans from both sides of the Israeli-Lebanese border have fled to Michigan, have come back home to escape the violence, watch the news every day, waiting to see what will happen to their families.

Unfortunately, many civilians did not escape the violence. Over 400 Israelis and Lebanese have died in the fighting. This has got to stop. The U.S. Government must push hard to stop the hostilities and the violence against innocent citizens. Innocent citizens are being killed in Lebanon and in Israel. I believe it is our responsibility to stand up and do everything possible to bring that violence to an end. That is why I am pleased to be a cosponsor of a resolution with Senator DODD, my colleague, Senator LEVIN, and Senator SUNUNU that expresses support to attain a cessation in hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel. We know this is not easy, but we know innocent people—families, Americans—are counting on us to show leadership.

Regrettably, over the last 5 years our Government has not played the leadership role so critical in the Middle East, the leadership role played by every other administration, whether Democrat or Republican. It is time to assert our leadership and put a stop to the violence as soon as possible. The innocent people of Lebanon and Israel have had enough of the violence and bloodshed. It is time for them to be able to live their lives in peace.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. 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.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation in the Senate?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in morning business with 10 minutes for Senators to speak therein.

THE AUGUST RECESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer. I commend him for his duty in the chair on a Friday morning where the smell of jet fumes have proven an allure to many of our colleagues in both parties who have headed off. I might say to my friend, the distinguished Presiding Officer, I do realize he cannot respond from the chair, but all of us look forward to that time. I am willing to spend the month of August in my own State of Vermont.

I said to somebody that we make sacrifices in these jobs, and they suggested the idea of being in Vermont for a month, which is one of the prettiest times of the year up there, was probably not the world's greatest sacrifice. I invite the Presiding Officer and anybody else to come up and visit. You don't have to wear a tie, and you can go to county fairs. Most of the people at the county fairs are Republicans,

but most of them vote for me, so I am delighted to go there. They would vote for the distinguished Presiding Officer, too.

PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today, I sent a letter to President Bush. In it I urged him to cease and desist from what has become an abuse of Presidential signing statements. I first began drawing attention to these matters 4 years ago, in 2002. I hoped they would end at that time; instead, the abuses have mounted. Outstanding reporters, such as Charles Savage of the Boston Globe, have taken note of this important matter. They have reported on particular examples of egregious signing statements by which the President attempts to rewrite our laws. Editorial boards across the country have become increasingly critical, and I would say increasingly alarmed.

This week, a distinguished bipartisan task force of the American Bar Association, made up of Republicans and Democrats, all across the political spectrum, released a unanimous report that was highly critical of the President's practice as "contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers."

With my letter today, I am trying to point the President to a better way. I urge him to raise any constitutional concerns he has with legislation with those of us in Congress while the legislation is pending and early in the process. If we agree with his analysis, we will work together to fix it. But, ultimately, under the Constitution, Congress writes the laws, not the President. Article I of the Constitution gives Congress the powers to write the laws. Article II of the Constitution requires the President to faithfully execute those laws. His oath of office very specifically says he will faithfully execute the laws, not make them.

I speak on this topic again today because of its immediate importance to the reauthorization and revitalization of the Voting Rights Act that we unanimously passed last week. The President signed it into law yesterday. It was 98 to 0 in the Senate. It was passed by an overwhelming bipartisan margin in the other body. I felt privileged to be there when the President signed that law. I talked with him prior to the signing and again after he signed. I complimented him for the words he used in the ceremony when he signed the law. He sounded like a man fully on board and supportive of the findings, purposes and provisions of the law. I said after the signing, while I was there at the White House, that what really struck me the most was the President's saying his administration would "vigorously enforce the provisions of this law and we will defend it in court." I praised President Bush for this statement. I did so again yesterday when the Judiciary Committee met.