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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 7, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SYRIA'S BLOODY SPRING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, there are moments in the lives of nations when the existing order is suddenly revealed as bereft of legitimacy and no longer viable. The wave of unrest spreading across the Arab world, touched off by the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor tired of petty humiliation by corrupt governments, has exposed the rot of decades of caprice, corruption, and incompetence. That this one man's desperate act could lead to the down-

fall of the governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and perhaps Yemen is testament to the pent up frustration of millions of people who were denied the basic rights and economic opportunity that we take for granted here in the West.

But it is in Syria, where the future of the Arab Spring seemingly hangs in the balance and where the security services have acted with the least restraint and maximum violence. Like marauding armies of old, select units of military and security services troops have been moving from city to city in a quest to quash the ever-spreading demonstrations that have become a feature of life in Syria.

Deraa, a town of some 75,000 lying near the border with Jordan, has emerged as one of the centers of the Syrian uprising against the 40 years of rule by the Assad family. Army and security forces have repeatedly assaulted the town and surrounding villages, killing hundreds of civilians and arresting anyone suspected of taking part in demonstrations against the regime. On April 29 in the village of Jiza, the Syrian secret police rounded up anybody it thought was involved with the protests, including Hamza Ali al-Khateeb, who had gone to watch the demonstration with other members of his family.

For a month, Hamza's family waited for him to return, worried but hopeful that he would be released unharmed. It was not to be. On May 30, Hamza's mutilated body was returned to them. He had been tortured, subjected to repeated electric shocks, and whipped with cables. His eyes were swollen and black, and there were identical bullet wounds where he had been apparently shot through both arms, the bullets lodging in his belly. On Hamza's chest was a deep, dark burn mark. His neck was broken, and parts of his body were cut off. Hamza Ali al-Khateeb was 13 years old. Video of the boy's shattered

body has been seen by millions on television and the Internet.

Hamza, like the Tunisian fruit vendor who set himself alight, has become a symbol to his countrymen and the world of the depravity and illegitimacy of a regime that would torture its own children to death.

Our ability to bring additional economic pressure on Syria is limited. Its economy is already under immense strain. It is small, weak, and isolated. Political pressure, in the form of a U.N. security resolution condemning the violence and crackdown, has been blocked by Russia and China. And there is dread over what will happen when Assad falls, given the internal divisions between Sunni and Shia, Muslim and Alawi, Christian and Druze. The confessional and sectarian splits are as pronounced as in Lebanon, the potential for large scale violence as great as Iraq.

The dangers are real, but the promise of what began in Tunisia and is now materializing in Egypt and elsewhere is also real. People of courage can determine their own destiny, and it need not be one of hereditary dictatorship, kleptocracy, or lack of opportunity and stagnation. In the Arab world, as elsewhere, people should be free to choose their own government to represent them and to chart peace with their neighbors.

To conclude otherwise means that we relegate tens of millions of people to suffer the capricious ruthlessness of their despots for generation after generation, or that we are willing to trade the illusion of stability for the harsh reality of their suffering. That is not the choice we made for ourselves 235 years ago, and it is not one that we should presume to make for others.

Bashar Assad is a ruthless tyrant whose time has passed and who clings to power only by virtue of brutal force. Our role and that of the international community should be to work with

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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