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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Immortal God, You are the meaning and mystery of all that is, was, and is to be. Thank You for Your sustaining love and for the opportunities to learn from each other. Thank You for the challenges and difficulties You use to test and refine us.

Lord, give our lawmakers the wisdom to trust the unfolding of Your providence. May they embrace a humility that seeks first to understand, instead of striving first to be understood. Deliver them from a false patriotism that would render unto Caesar what belongs to You. Guide them with Your powerful hand until the potentates of this world acknowledge Your sovereignty and might.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Democratic leader is recognized.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday marked the 100th anniversary of a heinous and violent event that has tragically changed the world. On April 21, 1915, near the beginning of World War I,

the German Army introduced to the world large-scale chemical weapons. That gas swept the battlefield. People died and suffered enduring pain, and those who survived, with rare exception, suffered the rest of their lives.

The Kaiser's army released tons of chlorine gas, nearly devastating the Allied line in Belgium. Europe would never be the same. The world would never be the same.

The use of poisonous gas proliferated during World War I, bringing death and devastation to members of the military and civilians. Following World War I, nations joined to support the Geneva Protocol of 1925, declaring that chemical weapons were so barbaric, so evil that they should be prohibited from use.

The use of chemical weapons has continued. The world will never forget the atrocities perpetrated by Hitler during World War II, as Nazi Germany used chemicals in the genocide of millions of Jews. During the Nazi regime, at the beginning of it, five men—one name started with S, one started with A, one started with R, I, and N—invented sarin gas. The world will not forget the atrocities perpetrated by the Hitler regime during World War II as Nazi Germany used chemicals in the genocide of millions—millions—of Jews.

The Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s was another terrible instance of lethal gasses being deployed as a tool of warfare. In 1988, Saddam Hussein unleashed a chemical arsenal on his own people, killing thousands of Kurds. Those pictures are available to see. The people are indiscriminately lying there—old men, old women, middle aged people, and babies. The world witnessed these events in horror and decided international action was absolutely necessary again. In 1992, the Chemical Weapons Convention was adopted in Geneva. The Chemical Weapons Convention outlaws the production, stockpile, and use of chemical weapons and requires their destruction. I voted for

that ratification with pleasure. I voted for ratification—which was ratified here in the Senate—of the convention to do something more about these chemical weapons.

But in spite of other efforts, the use of chemical weapons endures. One hundred years have passed since that fateful date in Belgium, and the world has yet to end the evil of those poisons. Today, Bashar al-Assad and his regime and forces loyal to him in Syria are responsible for horrific violence that violates basic decency. It violates international laws of war and has shocked the global conscience.

It is no secret that Assad has repeatedly used chemical weapons against the Syrian people and the country over which he dictates. Even after Syria was compelled to accede to the convention—the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013—there is clear evidence that Assad has continued to reign terror over his own people by using barrel bombs filled with chlorine to indiscriminately wreak havoc.

We are reminded of this all the time. I do not usually watch “60 Minutes.” It is a good program, but I usually have other things to do. But I watched because of the promotion on Sunday evening about something they were going to do on “60 Minutes.” They had graphic pictures that had never been shown before of what this evil person who runs this country of Syria did to his own people.

Sadly, in addition to the use of chemical weapons, the Assad regime has carried out all manner of atrocities throughout the course of the 4-year civil war in Syria. As we speak, about 400,000 Syrians have been killed. He is responsible for the vast majority of those deaths. That does not take into consideration the millions of people who have been displaced.

The regime has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including starvation, systematic murder, torture, rape, sexual violence and

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



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