

4/29/2009 Never Again: What We Do Matters

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April 29, 2009

Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago, I came to this House floor to address my colleagues and bring to their attention the danger that Iran poses to Israel. I shared with my colleagues some of the things that the Iranian leader had said about Israel to illustrate the seriousness of the threat. Madam Speaker, the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has again spoken.

Last week, at the opening day of the United Nations Anti-Racism Conference, the Iranian President was given a platform on which to spread racist and hateful views. In his address to the conference, he called Israel "the most cruel and racist regime," said that Zionism "is a paragon of racism," and said the creation of Israel was founded on "the pretext of Jewish sufferings and the ambiguous and dubious question of the Holocaust."

While the Iranian leader's comments are disturbing in any context, it is even more troublesome that he would question the Holocaust on the day before we celebrated the Holocaust Remembrance.

It is hard to understand how the United Nations and so many other countries fail to take the Iranian threat seriously. It is more than ironic that the U.N. would give one who has denied the Holocaust and advocated for the destruction of Israel the opportunity to speak at a conference convened to combat hatred and racism.

Although the United States and a few countries had the sense to boycott the summit and thereby refuse to lend credibility to the conference and speakers like Ahmadinejad, too many nations continue to act with complacency.

Last Thursday, our Nation's leaders gathered in our Rotunda here in the Capitol for the National Commemoration of the Day of Remembrance to remember the 6 million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. The theme of this year's events was, "Never Again: What You Do Matters." That theme is a message for all of us to take very seriously. When we say "never again," we need to think about the current threats to peace and security and take appropriate action to prevent senseless violence. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is an existential threat to the people of Israel and a grave danger to the rest of the world. Madam Speaker, the things we do, do matter. It is time for us to join together and confront this Iranian threat.

Today, Israel celebrates its 61st anniversary of its independence; again, a day in which we ought to remember the threat that still remains. Congress can take action to address this threat by approving H.R. 1327, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act, and H.R. 1985, the Iran Diplomatic Enhancement Act.

The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act gives States and local governments the authority to divest their assets from any company that invests \$20 million or more in Iran's energy sector. The other piece of legislation, H.R. 1985, would sanction any entity engaged in activities that contribute to Iran's ability to import gasoline or refine petroleum. I am a sponsor of these bills, and I believe that sanctions will increase pressure on the Iranian regime to change course and abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The Days of Remembrance call us to soberly evaluate the challenges to peace we face and take swift action as best we can to address them. Madam Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to quickly approve the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act and the Iran Diplomatic Enhancement Act. Never again: What we do does matter.