

- November 1989 Speech

MR. SPEAKER, IN OUR SOCIETY, THE MURDER OF A HOLY MAN HOLDS A SPECIAL REPUGNANCY.

THE MURDER OF SIX SUCH MEN -- IN ONE SAVAGE, SENSELESS AND BARBARIC ACT -- DEFIES OUR MORAL COMPREHENSION.

I KNEW THREE OF THE JESUIT PRIESTS WHO WERE MURDERED LAST WEEK IN EL SALVADOR. OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE SHARED THEIR PRAYERS FOR PEACE. AND TODAY I FIND MYSELF FILLED WITH GRIEF AND SADNESS AS I PRAY FOR THESE MEN OF PEACE AS WELL AS FOR THEIR YOUNG COOK AND HER 15 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, WHO WERE ALSO BRUTALLY MURDERED.

TO SAY I AM SHOCKED BY THESE EVENTS DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE MY TRUE FEELINGS. AND I'M NOT ALONE. FOR THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, I HAVE RECEIVED HUNDREDS OF PHONE CALLS FROM CONSTITUENTS AND OTHER CONCERNED CITIZENS, EXPRESSING OUTRAGE -- AND DEMANDING THAT OUR GOVERNMENT DO SOMETHING.

WELL, TODAY, THIS BODY WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING BY VOTING TO ACCEPT THIS RULE AND VOTING "YES" ON A SENSIBLE AMENDMENT TO BE OFFERED BY MR. OBEY PLACING A MODEST LIMITATION ON THE MILITARY AID WE SEND TO EL SALVADOR.

QUITE FRANKLY, I WISH THE AMENDMENT WERE STRONGER. AND I WISH THIS CONGRESS WOULD HAVE ACTED EARLIER IN DEMANDING AN END TO THE SENSELESS KILLINGS THAT HAVE CLAIMED OVER 70,000 LIVES IN EL SALVADOR; MANY OF WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN INVESTIGATED, HAVE BEEN COVERED UP OR HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED AWAY.

MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE HEARD ELOQUENT AND HEARTFELT DENUNCIATIONS OF LAST WEEKS MURDERS BY MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE. BUT THAT'S NOT NEARLY ENOUGH. TALK IS CHEAP. AND ALL THE DENUNCIATIONS AND SPEECHES IN THE WORLD WILL NOT END THE VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR.

IN 1980, WE ALL DENOUNCED THE MURDER OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO, WHO WAS ASSASSINATED WHILE SAYING MASS. IT IS NOW 1989 -- AND ABSOLUTELY NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN BRINGING THE GUILTY PARTIES TO JUSTICE. AND WHAT'S SO FRUSTRATING IS THAT WE ALL KNOW WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT MURDER -- A MAN WHO IS STILL A VERY POWERFUL INFLUENCE IN THE CURRENT ARENA GOVERNMENT.

WE ALSO DENOUNCED THE 1981 MURDERS OF TWO AMERICAN LABOR ADVISORS AND A SALVADORAN LABORER; THE 1983 LOS HOJAS MASSACRE; THE MURDER OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER HERBERT ANAYA IN 1987; THE 1988 KILLINGS THAT TOOK PLACE IN SAN SEBASTIAN ; AND THE BOMBING AT THE FENASTRAS UNION HEADQUARTERS THAT KILLED 12 WHICH TOOK PLACE ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO.

WE'VE DENOUNCED THESE ATROCITIES, WE'VE CALLED FOR INVESTIGATIONS AND FOR JUSTICE. AND TO DATE, NONE OF THESE CASES HAS BEEN RESOLVED AND NO JUSTICE HAS BEEN DONE. TO DATE, THE SALVADORAN MILITARY REMAINS ABOVE THE LAW. IN FACT, NO SALVADORAN MILITARY OFFICER HAS EVER BEEN PROSECUTED FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION AGAINST A SALVADORAN CIVILIAN. AND TO DATE, THIS CONGRESS AND THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS RESPONDED ONLY WITH WORDS.

AFTER WHAT WE WITNESSED LAST WEEK, I SINCERELY HOPE THAT WE REALIZE THAT WORDS ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH. EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF ARE NOT ENOUGH. VERBAL CONDEMNATIONS AND "SENSE OF THE CONGRESS" RESOLUTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH. WE MUST MAKE IT CLEAR THAT EVENTS LIKE LAST WEEK'S BARBARIC KILLINGS WILL PUT U.S. MILITARY AID INTO QUESTION.

MR. SPEAKER, TO DRIVE THIS POINT HOME, ONE NEEDS ONLY EXAMINE EVENTS IN EL SALVADOR WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE MURDERS OF THE 6 JESUITS AND THE TWO WOMEN.

REPORTS HAVE EMINATED FROM THE CATHOLIC AND LUTHERAN CHURCHES THAT THE SALVADORAN MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES HAVE ENGAGED IN SYSTEMATIC HARASSMENT OF CHURCHES, CHURCH PERSONNEL AND DISPLACED PERSONS WHO THE CHURCHES ARE ATTEMPTING TO PROTECT. CHURCHES HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED BY THE MILITARY. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP RIVERA Y DAMAS AND THE LUTHERAN BISHOP, MEDARDO GOMEZ HAVE RECEIVED A SERIES OF DEATH THREATS. AND, THE SALVADORAN ATTORNEY GENERAL, MAURICIO EDUARDO COLORADO, SENT A LETTER TO POPE JOHN PAUL II, CALLING ON HIM TO REMOVE THE COUNTRY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP FOR SECURITY REASONS.

MR. SPEAKER, THESE ATTEMPTS AT INTIMIDATION ARE UNACCEPTABLE. AND IT WAS WITH GREAT CONCERN THAT I READ IN YESTERDAY'S WASHINGTON POST, THE RESPONSE OF OUR AMBASSADOR WILLIAM WALKER WHO REFUSED TO CRITICIZE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT TROOPS FOR RAIDING CHURCHES -- AND COMPARED IT TO THE INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER PEARL HARBOR. MR. SPEAKER, THIS PRE-WORLD WAR II MENTALITY IS SOMETHING THIS CONGRESS HAS STRONGLY REPUDIATED AND EXPRESSED SHAME OVER.

MR. SPEAKER, I WHOLEHEARTEDLY CONDEMN THE FMLN OFFENSIVE WHICH WAS LAUNCHED ON NOVEMBER 11. AND I HAVE CONSISTENTLY DECRIED THEIR HORRIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. BUT THIS IS NOT A DEBATE OVER WHO ARE THE GOOD GUYS AND WHO ARE THE BAD GUYS.

THIS IS A DEBATE OVER WHETHER OR NOT THE UNITED STATES HAS AN OBLIGATION TO ASSURE THAT TAXPAYERS' MONIES ARE ARE GOING TO A GOVERNMENT THAT RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROSECUTES HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS.

THE AMENDMENT WE WILL VOTE ON IS THE VERY LEAST WE CAN DO.

MR. SPEAKER, LET US NOT ALLOW THESE HOLY MEN MEN TO HAVE DIED IN VAIN. LET THEIR PASSING MARK THE BEGINNING OF A NEW INTOLERANCE ON THE PART OF THIS CONGRESS TOWARDS SUCH UNCONSIONABLE AND SICKENING ACTS.