

**ASSAD'S KILLING MACHINE EXPOSED:
IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY**

BRIEFING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

—————
JULY 31, 2014
—————



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EDWARD R. ROYCE, California, *Chairman*

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey	ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida	ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, American Samoa
DANA ROHRBACHER, California	BRAD SHERMAN, California
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio	GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York
JOE WILSON, South Carolina	ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey
MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas	GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
TED POE, Texas	THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida
MATT SALMON, Arizona	BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania	KAREN BASS, California
JEFF DUNCAN, South Carolina	WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts
ADAM KINZINGER, Illinois	DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island
MO BROOKS, Alabama	ALAN GRAYSON, Florida
TOM COTTON, Arkansas	JUAN VARGAS, California
PAUL COOK, California	BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER, Illinois
GEORGE HOLDING, North Carolina	JOSEPH P. KENNEDY III, Massachusetts
RANDY K. WEBER SR., Texas	AMI BERA, California
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania	ALAN S. LOWENTHAL, California
STEVE STOCKMAN, Texas	GRACE MENG, New York
RON DeSANTIS, Florida	LOIS FRANKEL, Florida
DOUG COLLINS, Georgia	TULSI GABBARD, Hawaii
MARK MEADOWS, North Carolina	JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
TED S. YOHO, Florida	
SEAN DUFFY, Wisconsin	
CURT CLAWSON, Florida	

AMY PORTER, *Chief of Staff* THOMAS SHEEHY, *Staff Director*
JASON STEINBAUM, *Democratic Staff Director*

CONTENTS

	Page
BRIEFERS	
“Caesar” (an alias), Syrian Army Defector	4
David M. Crane, professor of practice, College of Law, Syracuse University	6
Cherif Bassiouni, emeritus professor of law, College of Law, DePaul University	7
Frederic C. Hof, resident senior fellow, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council	8

ASSAD'S KILLING MACHINE EXPOSED: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edward R. Royce (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ROYCE. This committee will come to order. I will ask everyone to take their seats at this time.

Today we, members of the committee, examine the evidence of horrific atrocities committed by the regime of Bashar al-Assad against the Syrian people.

When I was growing up, I grew up next to a Syrian family. And at that time, Assad's father was in power. And I remember the chilling stories our next-door neighbors would tell us about what was happening with respect to human rights in Syria. But the magnitude of this that we are going to discuss today—because the Syrian crisis is now in its fourth year—this is a crisis created and sustained by Bashar al-Assad, who responded to peaceful demands—and you all remember the CNN footage with people walking, saying, “Peaceful, peaceful” in Damascus, and then being fired upon by the regime—peaceful demands from Syrians. What were they asking for? For their universal rights. And that was met with unspeakable violence, including violence against children. In doing so, Assad has placed his own grip on power above the very survival of millions of people in Syria.

The conflict has created unimaginable human suffering. According to international statistics, we now have 11 million Syrians in need of humanitarian aid, which Assad has blocked in many cases, in many areas across the country. He calls that “Kneel or Starve.” The campaign is just one example of the brutality. Others include targeted killing, mass graves, ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, widespread torture, aerial bombardment of residential areas with conventional and, formerly, with chemical weapons, and the extermination of entire families.

Assad's brutality, as we know, is underwritten by robust military and other support from Russia and Iran and Hezbollah. Syria is a humanitarian crisis, but a strategic challenge too, as Assad has pulled his country into chaos.

Today the committee will view images of horrendous violence carried out on an industrial scale. It is no coincidence that these

photos were shown at the Holocaust Museum earlier this week. We will see evidence of the Assad regime's killing of at least 10,000 political dissidents between 2011 and 2013. And that killing continues today.

In April this committee unanimously condemned Assad's atrocities, passing House Resolution 520. We also passed a resolution authored by Mr. Smith, which called for the establishment of a tribunal to hold accountable the perpetrators of war crimes in Syria. Pure and simple, these photos cry out for justice.

We are honored to be joined by four excellent witnesses, including Caesar, a defector from Syria, who risked his life to collect and smuggle out of Syria over 50,000 photos of political dissidents tortured and killed by the regime after the protests began. I offer you a special thanks for speaking here today before our committee.

One cannot see images like these and not ask what can be done, what should have been done. And answering that isn't easy, but Mr. Engel, as all of us remember, was the early supporter. And I well remember him 3 years ago articulating the argument that many of us supported, that there were no foreign fighters at that time in the country. And the question was, would we support the free Syrian army? Would we give them the aid that they needed? As committee members, we are charged with confronting these difficult issues, which are moral issues, too.

I appreciate our Members' attention, and I appreciate their attending this briefing, a vivid and depressing reminder that, while action can be costly, so too can be inaction.

In closing, I would like to ask all in attendance to refrain from taking photographs or making audio or video, as we get underway with the testimony of our witnesses. And when I say video recordings, I mean of any kind, including with your smartphone devices. This briefing is not being broadcast. This is not how we usually operate, but these are some of the extraordinary steps we have taken to ensure the security of our witness.

And we greatly appreciate and will require, frankly, your full cooperation.

Chairman ROYCE. And I will now turn to Ranking Member Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing. I am proud of our committee and the work we have done together, on both sides of the aisle. This is, obviously, a very, very important hearing.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, particularly Caesar, who is risking his life to appear here in his first public event. Also Mr. Bassiouni and Mr. Crane, for their work shining a light on the human rights violations in Syria; and Ambassador Hof, who has served in the Obama administration, urging from the inside, and now from the outside, for action against the Assad regime.

I have been personally focused on Syria for a long time. In 2003 I passed the Syria Accountability Act, which imposed sanctions on the regime of Hafez Assad. And in March of last year I introduced the Free Syria Act, which authorized the President to provide lethal assistance to carefully vetted members of the moderate Syrian opposition.

If we had taken that approach a year-and-a-half ago, we may have been able to stem the growth of ISIS, and weaken the regime of Bashar al-Assad. But we didn't, unfortunately, so we will never really know what would have happened if we had acted then.

Then, last August, gruesome photos and videos began to leak out of Syria, images of human suffering and death on a massive scale. What we were seeing was the result of the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons on its own citizens, including hundreds of children. In my view, we had a responsibility to send a message to Assad that his criminal behavior would not be tolerated. But we didn't, unfortunately, we didn't.

Instead, here we are, a year later, and we see new evidence of the Assad regime's torture chambers and death squads. Thanks to Caesar, we will see the unvarnished reality of the Assad regime's atrocities.

Mr. Caesar is a courageous man. He has captured the face of evil through the lens of his camera, putting himself at grave risk. And we are grateful that he is with us today. These photos show Muslims, Alawites, and Christians, men and women, young and old, all tortured to death. Bodies piled up on top of one another, hanged, eyes gouged out, limbs torn from their sockets, bodies ravaged by starvation. We want to look away, but we must not. This is happening right now in Syria, as we speak, and we can do more to stop it.

Mr. Chairman, these are war crimes, plain and simple. You know, the media, unfortunately, doesn't tell the story of Syria any more. You can't turn on a radio or television and hear anything about what is going on in Syria. We hear about Gaza. But the truth of the matter is many more civilians are being killed in Syria each and every day than there are casualties in Gaza, but you don't hear about that in the media. It is almost as if Syria ceases to exist. It is just unbelievable.

Lastly, let's remember that these images represent only a small fraction of the suffering endured by the Syrian people. The death toll in Syria has topped 160,000. That is 160,000 futures left unfulfilled, 160,000 people who will never come home to their families. We need to focus and shine a light on the atrocities in Syria, happening as we speak.

So, I am grateful to the chairman for convening this briefing. Let's give this issue the focus it deserves. Let's ensure that the American people, and people around the world, see the unmitigated horror of the Assad regime.

And let me finally say, as well, the Assad regime could not have kept this up without the help of Iran, without the help of Hezbollah, another terrorist organization just like Hamas. Birds of a feather flock together. The Syrian people, unfortunately, are the big losers. We have to send a clear message today that we will never forget the Syrian people, and we will do everything we can to help.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you. In light of the votes, I am going straight to the witnesses now.

Mr. Engel and I will just note we have with us Caesar, who smuggled out of the country 50,000 photos of Syrians who were ar-

rested, tortured, and executed by the Assad regime. He will speak through a translator. And, Caesar, it is a great honor and a pleasure to have you here with us today.

We have Cherif Bassiouni. He is Egyptian-born, and an internationally-recognized expert in human rights law, who has advised the United Nations and the Department of State.

Mr. David Crane, former U.S. Government official who served as chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. And it is good to see David here again with us.

Fred Hof is the former State Department official who served as special advisor for transition in Syria in the Obama administration. We will begin with Caesar's testimony.

**STATEMENT OF "CAESAR" (AN ALIAS), SYRIAN ARMY
DEFECTOR**

[The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.]

Mr. CAESAR. In the name of God the most gracious, the most merciful, it is a great honor for me to be here in this house of democracy, and I deeply thank you for giving me the chance to come here and speak to you with all honesty, with transparency, and with love.

I am a Syrian national that has come here to speak to you with the simplicity of Syrian farmers, Syrian farmers that have been marginalized by Bashar al-Assad and by his father before him. I am not a politician, and I don't like politics. And neither am I a lawyer. And, although I have great respect for the law, I don't know much about its details. I am a military man that worked for the military police that was under the guise of the department of defense.

The main job for the people that were in the criminal photography division in the Syrian regime was to take pictures of criminal offenses, of criminal deaths. That, again, happens under the guise of the department of defense. And I had the job of taking pictures of any death that had happened within the military establishment in Syria before the revolution and after the beginning of the revolution. Our work multiplied greatly during the revolution. And the bodies of those incarcerated were being sent to the military hospitals of the regime, and we would be called to go there and take photographs of it, depending on the demand. But I did not only have access to the bodies that I took pictures of myself, but I had the access to look at all of the pictures taken by other photographers, as well, because me, along with one colleague, had the responsibility of downloading the pictures and archiving them on the state computers, and we overlooked its organization and its archiving.

I have seen horrendous pictures and bodies of people that had tremendous amounts of torture, like deep wounds and burns and strangulation. And bodies that had their eyes gouged out, as well as bodies that were severely beaten, horrible beatings that ended up in breaking of bones, and horrible bruises on the face and body, and bodies that were emaciated and very skinny. People starved to death, and their bodies looked like skeletons. These people died of starvation.

I have never in my life seen pictures of bodies that were subjected to such criminality, except when I saw the pictures of the victims of the Nazi regime.

I saw pictures of the bodies of young children, and the very elderly as well, and pictures of women. And sometimes I would actually run across pictures of some of my own neighbors and some of my friends that I actually recognized. I would be heartbroken for them, but I would not dare tell their own families, and could not even communicate what had happened to their children, because death would have been my fate if the regime found out that I was leaking out regularly secret information.

My work ethic, my morals, my religion did not allow me to be quiet about these horrendous crimes that I see. And I felt as if I was a partner to the regime in these horrendous crimes that I was taking photos of. I directly decided that I should defect, and I told one of my close relatives that I trusted, that that was my wish. And after conversations between me and between a trusted source within the revolution, they advised me that I not defect until I complete my mission of being able to get as many pictures as possible, and as much evidence as possible of these crimes.

And so, I would regularly give them pictures that I was taking and that I was seeing every day, and took pictures also from the state computers that I had access to, and also from the monthly archive that we had. And then, when I started becoming a bit more scared, and I felt that there was imminent danger on my life, I told my relative that it is now important for me to defect and escape, and he helped me in that regard. And he helped provide me the right conditions to allow me to escape from Syria.

I have come to your honorable Congress to give to you a message from the people of Syria. The first is what is going on in Syria is a genocidal massacre that is being undertaken by the biggest terrorist out there, Bashar al-Assad. He destroyed the country, and he killed his own people with no mercy. And he released the terrorists from his own jails, so they can spread corruption in Syria and outside of Syria.

And, second of all, these bodies that we have, way more than 10,000 bodies that we have pictures of, no one here can bring their life back to them. But I am here to tell you that there are more than 150,000 people incarcerated still in the jails of Assad. And their fate will be the same fate of those ones that I have taken pictures of.

The Syrian people are demanding and hoping and wishing that your emotions, your morals, your values would be moved within you. We have known you to be humanitarian people and moral people in the past. You have stopped, with your brave decision-making, deaths that happened in Yugoslavia and other places.

And I would like to end with the words of God: "He who kills a soul—he who kills an innocent soul only to kill a soul or for corruption in the land, it is as if he has killed the entirety of humanity. And he who saves a single soul, it is as if he has saved the entirety of humanity."

And thank you all very much, and may peace be upon you, and the grace and the blessings of God.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Caesar. For some context here, we will briefly hear from three preeminent experts here, 3 minutes each, and then we will go to questions and answers.

And, Cherif, if you would like to begin.

**STATEMENT OF CHERIF BASSIOUNI, EMERITUS PROFESSOR
OF LAW, COLLEGE OF LAW, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY**

Mr. BASSIOUNI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the privilege of appearing before you in connection with this documented, systematic torture and killing of an estimated 11,000 persons, with the potential of another 150,000 persons held in detention who may suffer the same fate.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members, what distinguishes this situation from other egregious human rights violations that rise to the level of international crimes is their widespread and systematic commission, but also their meticulous documentation by the perpetrators.

This documentation has been available to the administration and to other governments. These and other crimes committed by the Syrian regime, some of which constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture, require action to prevent their continuation and recurrence, and to ensure the criminal accountability of the perpetrators. The administration's failure to act more decisively than it has so far raises questions about compliance with international and U.S. law. It also raises questions about the moral stance of the United States, and the message that it sends to the Syrian regime and to others who commit international crimes with the expectation of impunity.

Mr. Chairman, if you look at the manner in which this systematic torture has taken place in the context of the history of Syria's relations with the USSR and followed by Russia, you will see the same pattern that the KGB employed throughout its history being repeated in Syria. The pattern is very much a KGB pattern. Interestingly enough, if you look at the two worst periods in human history, you will see the difference in the modus operandi, but the system being the same: Namely, the Nazi system and the KGB system in the Communist Stalinist era. The Nazi system was a very simple one. It was giving a number to any person both at time of arrest and at time of death, because the Nazis were counting on the extermination of those they sought to first arrest, then kill.

So, the numbers were consecutive, and very few people will forget the gruesome images of those who went to Auschwitz and similar camps with tattooed numbers on their forearms so that, ultimately, the total number was known. The Eichmann trial in Israel was probably one of the most important trials, which showed the careful documentations that the Nazis undertook, which was known at the time to the rest of the world.

I emphasize that, simply to say that, as the world looked on with what I would characterize as indifference to what was happening then, has been repeated since then in many similar contexts, only to encourage the perpetrators of these crimes to believe that they might benefit from impunity, or that they might find a political quid pro quo to avail themselves of at the time; an opportunity for them to be held accountable for it.

The Russian system, or the KGB system, was different, but it is exactly the system that the Syrians have adopted. Because at the time the military security system was established in Syria, it was being advised by the KGB, and there is every reason to believe that Russia still has a role, not only in advising, but also in being part of the support that it provides the Syrian regime, either through the anti-missile program, military advisors, and others, which it has continued to have.

There is also an implication that arises out of that, that if there is Russian involvement in the commission of international crimes such as those, namely crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture, that there is international criminal responsibility, through the chain of command responsibility to the top.

Chairman ROYCE. We understand that argument, Cherif. Thank you.

Mr. BASSIOUNI. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. David? No, David, just go ahead and give us your analysis. But, Mr. Crane, push the button, please.

Mr. CRANE. I should know better, I have been here before.

[Laughter.]

**STATEMENT OF DAVID M. CRANE, PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE,
COLLEGE OF LAW, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY**

Mr. CRANE. I do want to thank this committee and the chairman. As I look around the room, I have testified before this committee, and have enjoyed the support of this committee for over 12 years, with our work in West Africa and other places. So, again, my compliments to each and every one of you.

The slides are up, but, again, what we will do is, as I am speaking, I would like for them just to be—go ahead. As we get to a point where we are about ready to show the slides, just go ahead and show them as I speak. So go ahead, and continue forward. Please go forward.

[Slide]

All right. I would—as I am speaking, these are—again, to make—

Chairman ROYCE. David, I understand, and we understand the point. We are going to ask you—let's forego the slides, go through your points and your testimony. We know—I have seen you in action, I know what you can do in the courtroom. Lay out the case, and let's do this without the slides.

Mr. CRANE. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman, and we will just move forward then, and my apologies.

In January, I was asked, along with another team of very experienced international prosecutors, to go to Qatar and assess 55,000 photographs to determine their validity, their legal validity, as well as the forensic validity of those photographs. Many of the photographs that you see around the room, or some of the photographs—and we looked during that particular series of weeks at over 6,000, personally, related to this.

What we found—and we see very few smoking guns in this business, and as a chief prosecutor myself of an international tribunal, we rarely get this smoking gun evidence, but what we found was just that: 55,000 photographs which show the systematic torture,

starvation, and execution of what our forensic team was able to verify of approximately 11,000 human beings, showing direct evidence, evidence that, if I were a prosecutor bringing this evidence in, would prove beyond a reasonable doubt of war crimes and crimes against humanity. We were stunned by the magnitude of this.

The photographs themselves show the likes that we haven't seen since Auschwitz. I recall, when I was giving my opening statement in West Africa to the tribunal, I told them, "You are going to have to believe the unbelievable, because there is no language in the world that actually can describe the horror that these people went through."

And we have to honor them. Mr. Chairman, these people were loved, they loved, they had hopes, they had dreams. And so, by gathering this evidence, and taking this evidence forward in public forums such as this, under your leadership, Mr. Chairman, and your colleagues, we honor them by doing so.

The next step is, we have to move forward. It may take time. Certainly President Charles Taylor didn't think 10 years ago that he would be serving the rest of his life in a maximum security prison in England, but we must move forward. Time is not of the essence, we must be patient. But some day, as you review these slides, remember we do have to seek justice for the people that have been destroyed by the Assad regime.

So, I come to you with great confidence, I look forward to your questions related to this. We went in very skeptically, but we went away very impressed with this gentleman to my left, Caesar, who we named, for obvious reasons, so he would not be killed, or his family killed. But we must move forward to seek justice. It will take some time, but, again, we must move forward with the righteous fury that we had in West Africa. We must do so now for the people of Syria.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for stumbling a bit at the end.

I was misinformed as to where this was going.

Chairman ROYCE. No, no, no. David, David, thank you, and thank you for all your work—

Mr. CRANE. My pleasure, sir.

Chairman ROYCE [continuing]. On behalf of human rights over the years.

Let's go to Mr. Hof.

STATEMENT OF FREDERIC C. HOF, RESIDENT SENIOR FELLOW, RAFIK HARIRI CENTER FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Mr. HOF. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Engel, I would like to start by thanking you and the Members of the committee for taking the time to hear this important testimony. You are performing, really, an essential public service by doing this.

I think there are probably two fundamental policy alternatives available to the United States with respect to Syria. One alternative is to abandon the nationalist Syrian opposition, and try to cooperate with the Assad regime against ISIS. The second alternative would be to strengthen the nationalist opposition in Syria,

so that it can continue its two-way fight against the regime and ISIS, and to build outside of Syria a large and capable Syrian national stabilization force, consisting largely of former officers and soldiers now in refugee camps, a force that could eventually be deployed to Syria to stabilize the whole country.

I think what today's briefing does is effectively kill the "Let's collaborate with Assad" thesis. This briefing illustrates, in my view, the moral inadmissibility of any American collaboration with that regime. If the United States sees in ISIS a threat to the American homeland, we can engage ISIS targets in Syria independently, without the tainted assistance of Bashar al-Assad.

The other option, robust military assistance, will not be easy. There is nothing easy about this Syria problem. Valuable time has been lost. Nationalist fighters inside Syria are under terrible pressure from regime barrel bombs on civilian populations on one side, and ISIS ground operations on the other. Building a stabilization force outside of Syria will require time and reliable committed partners, as well as resources.

I believe, though, that that option, robust assistance for nationalist rebels inside Syria, and the building of a Syria national stabilization force outside of Syria, is the most conservative, constructive, and feasible way forward. Nothing here, nothing, is without risk. But collaborating with the regime responsible for what we have seen today is unthinkable.

I sincerely hope you are getting a sense of urgency from the administration on all of this. And, if you are not, perhaps you could encourage one. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you. I will just ask two questions and then go to Mr. Engel. But the first would be, as I go through these photos, the numbers that are written on the bodies of the victims—and, in some cases, they are written, the numbers are written, on white cards near the bodies. But the numbers written on the bodies, what is the purpose of those numbers—if I could ask Caesar. And who was responsible for assigning those numbers, if you know, and writing them on the bodies?

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. First of all, each body has two initial numbers: The number that is given to it, for a human being that gets incarcerated in intelligence branch; and then the number that is given to it after it has been tortured to death, and the pathologist, the doctor, gives it that number, that death number.

Chairman ROYCE. I see.

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. And under the number that is given to the body when they were alive is the number of the intelligence branch in which that person was tortured to death. And the number that is given to a body, or to a human being as he enters or she enters the intelligence branch is given to them and remains on them after their death, so they can identify who it was when they were registered initially in the intelligence branch. And so, just finally, the number that is given to them upon entering intelligence branch is given by Assad's intelligence. And then the death number is given and written by the doctor, the pathologist. That is also a ranking person within the military.

Chairman ROYCE. I think I will just ask one question, and then that way each Member may be able to ask a question before the votes come.

Eliot, I will go to you.

Mr. ENGEL. Caesar, once again, I want to thank you for being here. Thank you for your courage. We appreciate it. If we are ever going to put an end to these atrocities, we need people like you, who have the courage to stand up and speak your mind and let us know what is really happening.

Initially, you photographed 15 to 20 bodies per day, each identified by name. But by 2013 you were seeing 50 to 60 bodies per day, many of whom were torture victims. At what point did you realize that the Assad regime was committing war crimes? And did others realize it, as well, but perhaps they didn't have the courage that you had?

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. As you said, Congressman, at the beginning we were getting very small numbers, and then the numbers were going up: 40, 50, 60. And it was at that point, when the numbers, you know, started rising up by a lot, I realized that these were war crimes, and that the regime was trying to kill an entire nation to stop it all.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. And, again, thank you for your courage.

Ambassador Hof, I want to just turn to you. You sort of told us in your testimony, but I want to just reiterate it. I believe that we missed a tremendous opportunity to help the Free Syria Army, the moderate Syrian opposition. We should have been helping them years ago. We didn't, and I believe, had we have helped them, they would now be the preeminent opposition force to Assad, or maybe have even defeated Assad. Instead, we have ISIS playing that role.

So, let me ask you. Is it too late? Are we too late to help them? I know they are—the moderate Syrian opposition, they came to see us several weeks ago. They are fighting in the south, they are fighting in the north. Where is their fight more effective, in the north or the south? And what is the United States' best course of action? Have we missed the boat?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, I do believe we would be in a much better position today, in 2014, if the correct decisions had been made in 2012.

It is perfectly understandable to me why the President decided the way he did. I mean, it is a controversial subject, and he took a very, very, very conservative and what he thought was a risk-averse approach that, for reasons involving Syria, has turned out to be the most risky approach of all.

The position I don't think we want to be in is 2 years from now, in 2016, looking back at the middle of 2014 and saying, "If only we had done something in 2014." We will not know for sure, to be honest with you, whether or not it is too late, unless we decide that we are just not going to do anything. That will be entirely self-fulfilling.

My colleague, Ambassador Robert Ford, has just emerged from government. He is in a position to tell you that we do know who it is we need to be supporting. There is a chance of reversing this magnetic flow, where many young Syrian fighters go in the direction of ISIS because they can get weapons, ammunition, money,

and, for that matter, breakfast. This can be reversed. I believe this is the position of the administration. What is required is action, consistent with those analytical judgements.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Nearly three-and-a-half years, that is how long this crisis in Syria has been going on, and there is absolutely no end in sight, as long as Iran continues to support Assad.

We know the numbers, nearly 200,000 killed, millions displaced, millions more have fled to neighboring countries. It is a humanitarian disaster. It is a tragedy of epic proportions. And we failed the Syrian people on a human and policy level. From the outset, the Obama administration failed to establish a policy for Syria. Not only did it wait 5 months until it determined that Assad must go, but we lost much of our credibility after the President failed to act on our own self-declared red lines, once it was cleared that chemical weapons were used, further exacerbating the crisis.

Since then, it is anyone's guess what our policy on Syria is. We support the rebels against Assad, and then Assad can stay, but the rebels have to fight ISIL. I have never witnessed such an incoherent policy like this, and I just don't see the administration making any moves to bring this terrible human loss of life to an end.

Risk-averse? Yes, that is one way to describe it. To do nothing, yes, risk-averse. I would say that that is the Obama administration policy in a nutshell.

Caesar, the pro-democracy anti-Assad protests started around late February, early March 2011, as part of the Arab Spring wave across the region. Mubarak had just stepped down. Nobody could have predicted that 1 year earlier. And Assad, having learned lessons from his father, who, 30 years prior, quelled an uprising by massacring thousands in Hama, must have quickly decided that he would have to act much in the same way that his father did.

Many of the reports indicate that the victims you have photographed were political dissidents, part of the 2011 protest. Do you believe this to be the case? Do you believe that, if the United States had moved immediately to support the people and speak strongly against Assad and warn him against a violent response, that maybe this crisis could have been different? Is there a way now to end this tragedy as long as Assad is in the picture?

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. If the United States and if friendly countries of the Syrian people, like European countries, had stepped up in the very beginning, then Bashar al-Assad would have never had the green light to kill and murder all these people that I have seen. Bashar al-Assad and the people around him, based on my experience, are way weaker than you guys believe. And if we had barely acted with a bit more leadership, then the Assad regime would no longer be here.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Ted Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank Caesar for courageously appearing here today. We can't know the horrors that you witnessed, and we extend our sincere gratitude to

you for undertaking, at enormous risk, your willingness to bring to the world the undeniable proof of the atrocities of the Assad regime.

We have the opportunity to show the world that our worst fears are confirmed, and that we can't turn a blind eye, and that we can't simply wonder what might have been, because this continues.

For 3 years, we have said that the choices in Syria were too difficult. The rise of Islamic extremist groups have many believing that there is no one left to work with in Syria. But there aren't just two choices, the terrorists or Assad. There is a third option that needs to be relevant. It is humanity. It is having a clear moral voice.

Someone recently described our views, and the views of so many in the world to Syria as "psychic numbing." Your appearance here today, Caesar, is like a blow to our mid-section. It is like you are grabbing our shoulders and telling us that this is something that has to matter, you can't be numb to it, and we are grateful for that.

I would like to thank the panel for being here, as well. And I would just like to turn to Ambassador Hof. Given that this isn't an exploration of history, that this is ongoing, and to follow up Mr. Engel's question, can \$500 million in aid to the opposition make a difference on the ground? And, if not, what other options do we have to combine our clear moral voice with the action necessary to recognize what is happening to the Syrian people, and stop it?

Mr. HOF. Thank you, Congressman. I think what the \$500 million appropriations request signifies a decision by the President that the U.S. Department of Defense should be in the middle of assisting the Syrian nationalist opposition.

You know, can \$500 million, on its own, make a difference? I don't think so. I don't think, in the immediate future, it can. I mean this is a request for Fiscal Year 2015 money. That money, obviously, would not materialize for a while. I am not seeing—it may be taking place, but I am not seeing any evidence of the administration going to the Department of Defense and saying, you know, "Identify some money to reprogram here, so we can get going."

The way I see that particular sum of money being best employed is seed money to build, outside of Syria, what I refer to as this Syrian national stabilization force. I see that money being multiplied many-fold, not by the American taxpayer, but by partners of the United States in the region. This is going to be an extraordinarily expensive and complex operation. Building an army, basically.

And this is not something, frankly, that I think the American taxpayer needs to take the lead in. But the perception of American leadership and commitment is all-important here, if we are going to have partners in the region and elsewhere stepping up to the plate on this.

Chairman ROYCE. We have a long series of votes that are coming. And so I am going to ask everyone's cooperation. We will hold everybody to 3 minutes. That way we get to ask as many Members as possible.

We go now to Mr. Chris Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for this historic briefing.

Caesar, thank you for your bearing witness to an ugly and despicable truth. And, hopefully, this will become a catalyst for more action on the part of the administration, Congress, and the Europeans.

Let me just ask you. I only have a very brief couple of minutes. David Crane—and everyone needs to remember this—was the chief prosecutor for the Special Court of the Sierra Leone, and had an impeccable record of bringing people who committed atrocities—ultimately, Charles Taylor, who got 50 years because of the special court.

You testified at my hearing in October, Chief Prosecutor Crane, and made it very clear that a special court or some other hybrid was far preferable to the ICC. What you said, it is just not up to the task, has a track record that has been spotty, at best. It has had one conviction in a decade, over a decade, and that is of a lower operating functionary from the Democratic Republic of Congo. All the indictments have been against Africans, nobody else has been indicted by the ICC. And yet we pursued that.

And I asked in an op ed that I wrote on September 13th in the Washington Post, and continually asked people within the administration, to pursue this other track that would hold the rebels who commit atrocities and Assad accountable for these crimes against humanity and these horrific—as now have been documented even further by Caesar.

I would like to ask David Crane, if you would, to speak to the necessity of standing up this tribunal immediately, so that these people could be held to account. The documentation is there. Justice delayed is justice denied. I yield to David Crane.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Chairman Smith, and I appreciate your compliment.

At the end of the day, this isn't about us, this isn't about Caesar. This is about the people of Syria, who need justice done.

There are four possibilities which need to be considered. Obviously, the International Criminal Court is there, it is our permanent criminal court, and it is there. But we also have some other opportunities that we have created through what we call the Chautauqua Blueprint process, where we have taken some of the world's leading experts, and put together a statute for a future local, regional, or international prosecutor to begin a case against Assad.

As you have seen from these photographs, which my team and I in Qatar reviewed, we have the evidence. The Syrian Accountability Project has put together a crime-based matrix. We have mapped the conflict. We have even drafted sample indictments on all sides as to who have been committing atrocities.

So, we have the ability to support the Syrians in an internationalized domestic court. We have the ability, perhaps as a regional domestic court, and we also have the possibility of creating an international tribunal, very similar to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Regardless of what we decide to do as an international community, justice must be done. But it must be done carefully, appropriately. Yes, Mr. Smith, I agree with you, it would be great if we could go out the door and do this now. Frankly, if there was inter-

national backing, we actually could create a court next week, if we had that ability, because we do it.

You know, international criminal law has come a long way in the past 20 years, where Cherif and I have been working very, very hard to make that happen. We have the experience, we have the rules of procedure and evidence, and we have the jurisprudence to seek justice for the people of Syria. It is just a matter now of a political will to make that happen.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Cicilline?

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses. Thank you, Caesar, for your courage in coming forward to share these grotesque events with us, and hopefully with the rest of the world.

I want to ask whether or not the photographing that you did happened throughout the country, or were there areas in particular that you did it? And did you learn information, as part of your work, as to the circumstances of the deaths of the particular individuals, or were you simply asked to photograph them without any background?

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. We were responsible for a specific area in Syria. It was Damascus, and my division was Damascus. It was the suburbs of Damascus, and sometimes the suburbs of Daraa Province.

And as far—when they would call us and bring the bodies so we could take pictures of them, the intelligence agents would come with them. Neither I nor the pathologist, the doctor that would be with me, were allowed to get any other information. I was ordered to take pictures. I would take pictures, and we didn't dare ask anything else of the intelligence agents.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. Ambassador Hof, you spoke several times about the notion of creating a national stabilization force outside of Syria, which sounds like a very effective and thoughtful idea, but I think has, obviously, some long-term preparation and engagement of multi-lateral partners, et cetera. Is there anything that you think we should do in the short term, today or quickly, to support a response?

And, Mr. Crane, I just want to ask you quickly, I have drafted a letter, and I want to look forward to working with the chairman and our Ranking Member to, you know, based on what we have seen today, to suggest to the International Criminal Court that they seek an indictment of Bashar al-Assad. I asked for that some time ago. And I recognize that there are limitations on what the prosecutor can do, and needs a referral, but a letter that says, "The Congress of the United States thinks this is important, is watching this closely, demands action," would that kind of voice from the United States Congress to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court be helpful in raising international awareness, and maybe moving them?

Mr. HOF. Thank you, Congressman. My view on this concerning lethal military support to the nationalist opposition is that our government really needs to move on two tracks. The one I mentioned is the longer-term track of building a national stabilization force that can eventually enter the country and restore law and order in the entirety of Syria.

Near term we have the problem of Syrian nationalist rebels, a beleaguered group, if ever there was one, being pressured in two directions, by a regime and by ISIS, two elements that share the objective of wiping out the Syrian nationalist opposition. So there is a clear need for near-term lethal assistance for these groups. I see reports in the press that that is happening, and I certainly hope that that is the case.

Mr. CRANE. Any time that this important body writes a letter and lets the world know that justice must be done for people who have suffered so greatly, as we see around this room this morning, would be helpful.

This committee has a lot of respect throughout the world. I recall back in May 2005, under the leadership of Mr. Royce, House Resolution 127, which called for Charles Taylor to be handed over to our court for a fair and just trial. Six months later, he was handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone for a fair and just trial. And now he is serving 50 years, which is basically the rest of his life, in jail for that.

So, any signal by this important committee that they are for justice, whether it be to the International Criminal Court, or whatever body, is important.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Kinzinger?

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will remind everybody that President Bill Clinton said his greatest regret in office was doing nothing in Rwanda. This is the situation we find ourselves in today, watching a massacre happen, basically in Iraq by ISIS, by Assad and ISIS in Syria. And for three-and-a-half years, this administration has utterly done absolutely nothing and, in fact, has downplayed these human rights violations that you are seeing on the pictures here because, I believe, that showing these human rights violations to the world would compel the administration to action.

This also appears to be eerily similar, as was mentioned, to what we saw and what we see in historical pictures of Nazi Germany. And I think history will judge us very harshly about that.

Mr. Hof, you talk about the national stabilization force, and we talked about the need to shore up the moderate opposition, and give them the weapons they need and the strength that they need to fight, really, a two-front war, which is something that I think also needs to get out, which is the Free Syrian Army is not just fighting Bashar al-Assad. Now they have to take back land that they liberated from ISIS, who came in behind them, and now brutally obstruct the people. I believe once we build up the Free Syrian Army, it may be appropriate to take military strikes, both against ISIS and eventually against the Assad regime, thereby bringing down both bad players and building up, by definition, the Free Syrian Army.

Caesar, I want to say thank you for your bravery in being here. This is not easy, but you are a true hero to your people. And I want to say thank you for being here in this difficult time, and doing very difficult things.

Mr. Hof, I just want to ask you, why do you believe that the administration is so hesitant to call out the human rights violations of the Assad regime, when they are very eager to talk about what is going on in Gaza and Israel? And what is the benefit to keeping the American public in the dark, in terms of what these actions are?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, I noticed, for example, in yesterday's announcement of additional monies for humanitarian assistance in Syria, the administration did indeed employ some pretty strong language about the atrocities of the Assad regime. In his Iftar statement of several weeks ago, the President of the United States employed pretty strong language about the atrocities of the Assad regime.

Yes, again, none of this is easy. There are no silver bullets that is going to make this problem go away. But making the transition from strong rhetoric to appropriate action, this is what has to happen. I am hoping that the request for \$500 million is a signal that there is a transition going on in administration policy. But to the extent, Congressman, you and your colleagues can really, really encourage it, I think it will be all to the good.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Grayson?

Mr. GRAYSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Hof, you are suggesting that we back, financially and military, a new organization to be raised out of the rebel refugee camps outside of the country, and that, at some point, that force then try to reoccupy the country of Syria. Has that strategy ever worked before, ever?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, I am not aware of specific examples of that particular strategy ever having worked. I think the way these things work, though, is that there are precedents sometimes established when none existed beforehand. My sense is that this is the most conservative, creative, and constructive way forward over the long term. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of Syrian officers and soldiers who have already been trained, who are in refugee camps, who are in the economies of the countries that have received refugees in Turkey, in Jordan, and Lebanon, elsewhere. Getting these forces organized into a stabilization force that can eventually enter the country and restore law and order, I have no illusions about the complexity, about the difficulty, but I honestly believe this is a project the United States really needs to provide leadership on.

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Hof, we spent \$4 trillion and 10 years and thousands of American lives building up a stabilization force in Iraq. And now it seems that, at this point, the one thing that the Sunnis and the Shia and the Kurds can agree on in Iraq is that none of them want to fight ISIS. Why do you think that your hypothetical force would be any different?

Mr. HOF. I think what we are already seeing, Congressman, is Syrian nationalist opposition forces fighting ISIS, losing lives, making enormous sacrifices. What I am not recommending here is an American invasion or occupation of Syria. What I am recommending is a training and organizational effort that would take place outside of Syria, in countries that would consent to support this, to provide facilities.

Obviously, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Turkey would be extraordinarily important in this context.

Chairman ROYCE. It did work in Rwanda with the RPF. It did stop the killing in 1994. It is just an observation to—

Mr. GRAYSON. Well, Mr. Chairman, if we want to discuss historical analogies, one could refer to the Bay of Pigs, also. One could also refer to the PLO. And whatever you might say about the PLO, it certainly has not been an effective fighting force against Israel.

But my time has expired. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Or the free French. Anyway, we go to Ted Yoho from Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Caesar, thank you for being here and bringing this atrocity to the light of the world. You testified earlier that you recognized some of the tortured victims that you were photographing. They were neighbors, friends, children of your neighbors. Are you aware, or can you tell us, number one, were you surprised that the Assad regime had gone after these people? And are you familiar with anything those people had done to the Assad regime to bring this kind of treatment to them?

And then, Mr. Crane, if you could, let us know what we would have to do, as a body, to bring Mr. Assad to the criminal court you were talking about.

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. Congressman, first of all, no, I wasn't surprised. The way this regime operates, I was fearing for my own life, and I worked for it. So the way that the regime oppressed the entirety of its people was not surprising to me, even when I did see my own neighbors and friends.

Mr. YOHO. Was it any personal religious beliefs that they had, or just speaking out against the regime?

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. No, it was merely any little suspicion that they would get. In Syria we have checkpoints that popped up all over the place. So if you stop at any checkpoint, and the person doesn't like you, if they think that your name matches some other name, all it takes is for them to just decide that they want to take you, and that was all it took.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you. Mr. Crane?

Mr. CRANE. As I have said, this committee carries great weight within the international community and is deeply respected.

Just the fact that we are here this morning is important. The world is watching this committee and its leadership. So the committee needs to continue to stay on the public record in whatever capacity the chairman and others want to do this.

We also need to be unwavering in that commitment. We can't be unequivocal. Even though justice is not black and white, putting one's marker down, saying, "Enough is enough," and that something should be done, is important.

We must continue to have the international community dialogue and work on this, and to continue to seek justice mechanisms that will be workable. We have had a disappointment with the International Criminal Court, with the resolution in May. However, that doesn't mean we should stop.

And lastly, the committee should certainly, in my opinion, back international community efforts to hold this accountability, and to

continue holding hearings and support any administration that is moving forward some day to create a justice mechanism.

Mr. YOHO. I will talk to you more, thank you. My time is out.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, sir.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Schneider?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Caesar, I want to personally thank you. Thank you for your pictures, for your words today, for the courage to come and speak out, not just here, but on the world stage, and for the humanity you have shown. Justice is only possible, and justice starts, when people like you stand up and do what is right. And I hope your courage can be an example for the rest of us in this body around the world to bring justice.

As I see it, I think we need justice at different levels. Bashar al-Assad must be brought to justice, and face the reality, and be punished for his crimes. But we also need to find justice for Syria, and the people of Syria. And at the lowest level, perhaps the most important, the families of the individuals we have seen the pictures of today, they need their justice.

Justice can only come, though, when we can end this violence, when we can find a way to bring reconciliation to Syria, and then bring justice to the country and to the people of Syria. So thank you, Caesar, again.

Ambassador Hof, I will turn to you, I guess. The work you have done, your understanding, is it possible to ever get to reconciliation in Syria, even if we find a way to stop the violence?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, I believe it is possible to get to reconciliation in Syria. But, you know, at the end of the day, what I believe, even as someone who has been reasonably familiar with Syria over 50 years, is not important. What is important are the efforts we make, the efforts the Syrian opposition makes, what we say about the necessity of having a Syria where citizenship is the most valuable, the most salient facet of political identity.

Syrians, through good governments and bad governments—mostly bad governments—over the course of 60 years did manage to build something of a sense of nationality identity and citizenship. Trying to piece that back together, trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together, this is going to be a challenge, I think, over the next couple of decades. Even if we have every element of good luck in the next few months, this is going to be a long and difficult process.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you—I appreciate that. In my few seconds let me also say I believe that will be all but impossible if Syria is pulled apart by the likes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran not supporting the reconciliation necessary. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Perry?

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your attendance. Caesar, most of the questions, quite honestly, have been answered for me, from the standpoint, Caesar, you don't know whether they were Christian, whether they were Alawite, Sunni, showed up at the wrong place, said the wrong thing. They were dead. So maybe I will ask some tactical questions, so to speak, to give us an appreciation of maybe what you saw and can appreciate.

So what is this place, in this photograph, for instance? Who put the bodies there? What kind of things were done to people? What kind of torture? And was it done systematically to adults, children, elderly? Was it all the same? Was it all the same kind of things? I think it helps us get an appreciation of the brutality, it gives us an appreciation of who was involved. I will just let you go ahead and speak.

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. First of all, what you see here is the garage of the military hospital. We used to use the morgue, but they were bringing way more bodies, so we decided to start using the garage. All of the intelligence branches around Damascus would take the people that they had tortured to death, and bring it to this military hospital. So these bodies would come from all of the different intelligence branches by intelligence agents, and become transported after they are dead to this military hospital.

The intelligence agencies, the regime, made no difference between the age or the sect or the religion. I saw Christians, I saw Alawites. I saw Alawites with Bashar al-Assad's face tattooed on them. I saw women, I saw elderly, and I saw children. And I saw no difference between the ages or anything else, as far as the brutality of the torture. It was across the line.

He doesn't care if—from what I have seen, even if it was his brother and had said no to his policy, he would kill him. His main thing was holding on to power.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, my time has expired.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Kennedy?

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you and the ranking member for holding this hearing. To our distinguished panel, thank you for all of your work around the world, and particularly in Syria.

Caesar, I just echo the comments of my colleagues in thanking you for your courage, and for bringing these photos to light for the entire world, and for us here, in Washington.

Mr. Hof, if I can just follow up on a brief question with you, sir. You mentioned an international force. You referenced a couple of nations that you thought, I think, might be willing to lend some support there. The administration has recently announced \$500 million in aid to moderate Syrian rebels.

How, sir—Russia has impeded progress through the U.N. Security Council. There doesn't seem to be a whole lot of emphasis or push from some of our European partners. This would seem to have to take at least strong cooperation from some of our Gulf allies and some other Gulf countries that certainly are troubled by what they are seeing in Syria, as well. I am sure they are as horrified by these photographs as we are. There doesn't, at least publicly, seem to be much of a push for them to take much of a lead. No one is clamoring to take a lead in this, either.

What can be done? What should we be doing? What can the international community do to try to increase some of that emphasis?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, thank you for your question. I think you are absolutely right. In terms of the international community, in terms of the way the U.N. Security Council works, I think it is safe

to say there is no appetite, there is no near-term possibility for an international or multi-national stabilization force for Syria.

What I have in mind is a force that would be entirely Syrian in composition.

Mr. KENNEDY. And just building off that, sir, then you think, what assets and resources do you think are necessary, in the short term, in order to get there? And is there, from your understanding, enough will to train, finance, support, and equip that force that is fighting, as I think it was Mr. Kinzinger pointed out, two pretty brutal enemies on both sides?

Mr. HOF. I suspect, Congressman, that, as we speak, in Tampa, at the U.S. Central Command, there is a frenzy of planning going on. Whether it is for this particular idea, you know, a Syrian national stabilization force, or something else, I don't know. But planning, in connection with the \$500 million request, is going on.

What is absolutely essential here, if an idea like this is going to take hold, is the full cooperation of countries such as Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates. And those countries that are going to be asked to base training facilities to be used by our Department of Defense are going to want to know in the first instance whether or not the United States is truly committed to seeing this through. Otherwise, people like His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan are going to say, "Well, you know, you are asking me to take a terrible risk here. Where, exactly, is the United States in all of this?"

So, I think a presidential decision on where he and the administration really want to go on this, this is the essential first step.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, and I yield back. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Bera?

Mr. BERA. Thank you. And again, I will echo the comments of my colleagues, for the courage that Caesar has shown in documenting these atrocities and bringing them to public attention. There are a couple comments that have been echoed. This is about the people of Syria. And any long-term solution has to come from within the people of Syria.

Also, I think, Mr. Crane or Mr. Ambassador Hof, you talked about how we have to build an international outcry, which is not there. And this is going to be a long and difficult process. We can't look at this as what we do in the next 6 months, or the next year, but we have to look at this in years, if not decades, and in the context of the broader shuffling that is happening in the entire Middle East, you know, as we look at Iraq, as we look at North Africa.

I guess I would ask the question to Mr. Crane or Mr. Hof. A first step is building that international outcry, is, you know, tapping into our better natures and those truths so there is that outcry, so there is that will to engage in a long-term strategy. What is the best way for us to build that international outcry?

Mr. CRANE. Well, I think that the continuing dialogue is important. But I think, reflecting on this—and I have been working with the Syrian opposition, with the Syrian Accountability Project, since March 2011, so I have given this a great deal of thought, particularly dealing with justice for the people of Syria. The long-term prospects of justice being done for them is minimal at this point,

with the ICC being rebuffed. The political dust in the air related to just creating some type of justice mechanism is problematic.

But I was thinking back. When I unsealed the indictment against President Charles Taylor of Liberia in June 2003, completely outside the diplomatic and political niceties of the world, and just through the ace of spades on the table, 2 months later he was out of power and in some type of house arrest in Nigeria, and 2 years later he was handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

I think something for us to consider is that we do create that justice mechanism now, some type of international hybrid tribunal, and let's get started. Let justice drive the train, not the diplomats drive the train. I think that that will cause an immediate dialogue, and it will also cause the parties to be looking over their shoulder, because all parties are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity now.

Mr. BERA. So that is an immediate step that we can take at this juncture, which will send a strong message.

Mr. CRANE. I think—

Mr. BERA. And the United States can lead this.

Mr. CRANE. Yes. I think we could start a dialogue now, internationally, to start creating it. We actually have the framework for a court, we have a draft statute, and we even have a package by which we could turn over to a prosecutor an immediate beginning, to include draft indictments. That is possible in the next 6 months.

Mr. BERA. I would love to see this.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Lowenthal?

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Well, I too have—as I sat here, I have been overwhelmed by the atrocities and the horrors and the sense of—you know, of helplessness, really, about what can be done. And we have heard a lot about—from Mr. Hof about how we strengthen the Syrian independent forces to take on both ISIS, and also to take on Assad.

Sometimes I sometimes worry that we could have a repeat of what took place in Iraq, in that—with Maliki, is that it could end up with arming forces who then turn over their arms to other forces. We have seen the failure of the ICC, the International Criminal Court in the U.N., and you have raised the issue of maybe we should continue doing that, also. Maybe not through the ICC, but creating another tribunal and focusing the world's attention on that.

The one part I haven't heard as much about is what more humanitarian aid we can provide at this moment. What are we doing with some of the folks that need to get out of Syria? What role should the United States—we have seen the tremendous number of refugees in both Jordan and also in Turkey—what should we be doing, though, just in a humanitarian strength? I would like to understand more. I understand now some of the other ways, but I am just struck with the tragedy that is going on. And is there anything that we can do immediately to help people get out of a horrible, horrible situation?

Mr. HOF. Congressman, I guess I will take a stab at that. First of all, thanks to you and your colleagues and your counterparts in the United States Senate, the American taxpayer has stepped up

to the plate on this. There was additional funding announced yesterday. I am not sure I am 100 percent accurate on the number, but I believe it brings the United States to something like \$2.4 billion. A lot of this money, unfortunately, has been kind of backed up by the inability of the United Nations humanitarian workers to get access in Syria to places they need to go.

You know, upwards of half of the Syrian population is in need of some kind of urgent humanitarian assistance. And I am talking about people inside Syria. Forget about the fact that there are three million refugees. There are upwards of six-and-a-half or seven million people internally displaced in the country.

A U.N. resolution was recently passed giving the United Nations authorization to go in to various parts of Syria without the permission of the Assad regime. This is potentially very, very, very significant, if there is strong follow-up.

Chairman ROYCE. All right. We have 6 minutes left. We have Ms. Gabbard, followed by Ms. Frankel.

Ms. Gabbard?

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for being here. Caesar, your courage in being here today, and all that you have done, is very empowering to so many people, not only those who are here today, but to many others.

The question that I had, both for you and others on the panel, is what do you hope that these photos and telling this incredibly powerful story will do to galvanize support for the Syrian people? But also, how do you hope that this will encourage more Syrian people to also stand up and to take ownership?

You mentioned, Caesar, that the Assad Government is weaker than we think they are. But also, the next question is, is the Free Syrian Army, or the rebels, stronger than they appear to be, or than we hear that they are?

If I could ask Caesar to answer first, thank you.

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. The reason that I took the risk of taking these pictures out of the country, and of bringing them here, and of coming here today, is to be able to ask the friends of Syria—but, most importantly, of this Congress—to help stop the killing that is going on as we sit here today.

And as far as this Free Syrian Army and the revolutionaries, they are much stronger than they seem, and they are strong because they believe in their cause, and their cause is a just one, as you can all see. And as soon as you begin to help them, you will realize the fruits of your aid immediately.

Chairman ROYCE. Ms. Frankel?

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, thank you to the ranking member and to yourself, for bringing this. And thank you to the panel and, Caesar, for your testimony today.

I mean, I share the horror of my colleagues. I am very, very sad to hear about this. It really—I think it breaks all our hearts. And I think what is so frustrating, what even makes it sadder, is I have a very uneasy feeling that—not exactly sure what to do to try to immediately stop this horror.

I have heard some suggestions today that seem to make sense. One is that—put some resources and training and in the long term, try to build up the appropriate resistance from Syrians who will

come back into the country and stand up to this regime of Assad. And it also makes sense to give humanitarian support.

What I am not quite sure—is there anything else really immediately that we can do? Because it sounds to me as though there is some uncertainty as to whether or not there are forces there that can really repel Mr. Assad, ISIL. Can somebody answer that?

Mr. HOF. Thank you for the question. I think, in terms of what can be done immediately to stop this, please, please don't underestimate the potential power of bearing witness to what is going on. The fact that the members of this committee have—and I know you have so much on your plate—the fact that you have taken the time to hear this testimony is really a force for good. This miserable regime in Syria knows that it is under the microscope, and I think this is something good.

Mr. BASSIOUNI. Mr. Chair, if I may add to that point?

Chairman ROYCE. Yes, Cherif.

Mr. BASSIOUNI. Thank you. I chaired five United Nations Commissions of Inquiry, starting with the first one in the former Yugoslavia. It really starts with the gathering of the evidence. It is not a question of trying to set up a tribunal. We need to gather the evidence. We do not have an appropriate mechanism to gather the evidence. The present U.N. Commission of Inquiry has been sitting in Geneva for 2 years. That is not where you gather the evidence.

Whether it was in the former Yugoslavia or in Libya or in Bahrain, I was in the field, gathering the evidence. When a tribunal was established, the tribunal had the evidence to be able to proceed on. This is something the administration can do right away, move for the establishment of a special investigator—call him a special rapporteur—for the United Nations or the Security Council, with the power of gathering the evidence. That, more than anything else, will drive a message home to the perpetrator that somebody is keeping record. This is not only media talk, but somebody is making a file, and the responsibility of that person may be at stake 1 day.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Cherif. We—

Ms. FRANKEL. Mr. Chair, if I might just say—because this is so horrific—I think the very least we could do with this committee is to put our heads together and figure out every way to put a spotlight and to keep it on this situation. And I thank you, I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We thank you, Cherif, thank you for those comments. I know that Caesar wanted to make one last statement here.

[Pause.]

Chairman ROYCE. While he is doing that, I will say this hearing only occurred because of Caesar's bravery and commitment to humanity. But it is a commitment to humanity shared by the ambassador, by David Crane.

Cherif, thank you again.

Go ahead.

Mr. CAESAR [via interpreter]. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity. And I wanted to tell everyone here that I have sent a letter to President Obama, pleading with him to please end the killing of civilians in Syria. And I ask all of you to please don't forget those still in jails, especially women and chil-

dren. Please make sure that they get released so they don't get tortured the way these other people have.

Chairman ROYCE. We understand there are many multiples in jail compared to the photographs that—11,000 we saw here today, and that part of this effort is to stop the torture and stop the killing in the jails across Syria by the security services.

We have covered many issues here today: International justice, U.S. policy. But, first and foremost, as Mr. Deutch said so well, this was a moral body blow to confront this type of evil. And the committee will certainly continue its bipartisan work on Syria. Four years of killing and dying with no end in sight is intolerable.

I do want to thank the ranking member, Mr. Engel, for his leadership on this issue for the last 4 years, as well. And I thank you, Caesar, for reminding us of that in such a powerful way.

We will have to stand adjourned; we are out of time on the vote. [Whereupon, at 11:11 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]