Mr. Speaker, I

appreciate the gentleman’s courtesy in

permitting me to speak on this resolution

and his leadership in bringing it

forward. I am going to support the resolution.

I, too, am troubled by what we

have seen with the Syrian government.

I am heartened by some activities in

the Middle East. I think there is some

real progress. But I would step back for

a moment and ask us to reflect on

something that has been happening

that does not reflect so well on our

government.

Just moments ago, the House overwhelmingly

approved an amendment

advanced by the gentleman from Massachusetts

(Mr. MARKEY) and me that

dealt with making sure that money

that we approved in the supplemental

was not used to torture suspects of terrorism.

We have this sense, and it is

one that the people I represent feel

very strongly about, that we have a responsibility

and an obligation as the

world’s oldest democracy to be upholding

our standards of rule of law, of due

process. We have made torture illegal

not just because people are concerned

that it is an immoral practice, we do so

because it is not a good way to get useful

information.

Dictatorships torture indiscriminately,

but it is not a way, as the Intelligence

Community well understands,

that we get good information upon

which to base activities that may put

our men and women at risk and to protect

United States interests. Furthermore,

we do not torture suspects of terror

because if we do so, then any information

that is gathered from that

process taints any potential case and

we cannot bring people to justice in a

court of law.

Last but not least, we do not torture

because we want a standard established

where we can use our moral authority

to make sure that Americans abroad

are protected, whether they are in uniform

or they are civilians.

There are a variety of moral, practical

reasons why we are against torture.

Yet I would note that there are

too many press accounts for us to ignore,

too many reports from nongovernmental

organizations that the

United States is participating in and

condoning torture on behalf of prisoners

that we have taken to other

countries. There is a famous case that

now the Canadian government wants

investigated where the United States

kidnapped a Canadian citizen and rendered

this person to Syria where he

was tortured. We have called for this

Congress to get on top of what is, I am

afraid, an emerging scandal, where we

use extraordinary rendition, where we

kidnap and transport people, where

there is not effective oversight, where

Congress does not know what is going

on, where there are people who are not

being held accountable, where there

are problems that we have seen with

people who have been in custody of the

CIA and some of the American prisons

that we have had in Afghanistan and

Iraq.

We, as a Congress, need to be doing

our job because we do not believe in

torture; it is illegal; it is against international

conventions; it is against the

interests of the United States. And I

must re-emphasize the irony when we

come forward with a resolution that

points out the problems, legitimate

problems, the abuses in Syria, and then

it appears as though the United States

is willing to offer up people to countries

like Syria, where we thought they

are in fact going to be tortured.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that Congress

gets ahead of this issue, that Congress

does its job to investigate these

widespread reports that are coming

through now our own legal system,

that are coming through the media,

that are coming from nongovernmental

organizations, that we exercise our

oversight to make sure that we have

our own house in order. There should

be no prospect that we are on one hand

going to be a Congress that condemns

torture and abuse of human rights in

Syria, and on the other hand we are

going to look the other way when we

may be offering up people who are suspects,

not convicted of anything, to be

turned over to the hands of these same

torturers.

I would sincerely hope that we will

have activity on the part of all of us to

make sure the many committees in

Congress do their job to provide this

oversight and that we are not relying

on the media, nongovernmental organizations,

and what trickles through the

legal system to do a job that we should

be doing.