Mr. Speaker, just yesterday

I returned from the Balkans

along with the gentleman from Virginia

(Mr. MORAN) and the gentlewoman

from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

We had hoped to go into a region called

Kosovo to monitor elections that were

being held this past Sunday by the Albanians

in the region of Kosovo who

make up 90 percent, 2 million people, 90

percent of Kosovo, but have no political,

economic or human rights whatsoever.

I have been to Kosovo a number of

times, and I can tell my colleagues the

people, they are truly a people under

oppression. We have witnessed during

the past few weeks, Mr. Speaker, the

wanton killings of men, women and

children by the Serbian police forces

going into villages and slaughtering

people. It reminds us of what happened

in Bosnia early on. If the West, particularly

the United States, does not

take strong action early on, we will

wind up with another Bosnia in

Kosovo.

Kosovo again are people, Albanians,

90 percent ethnic Albanians, they have

no rights, they have no political rights,

they have no economic rights, unemployment

is high, they cannot teach in

the Albanian language. They are constantly

oppressed, harassed, beaten and

murdered. This Sunday they conducted

their own elections. The Albanian leadership

conducted their elections. Dr.

Ibrahim Rugova was reelected as the

president. They elected a parliament.

This parliament and Dr. Rugova had

been elected 6 years ago but the parliament

had never been allowed to

meet under threat of jail or exile.

We had hoped to go there, but we

were stopped at the border. First, we

were denied visas here in Washington

and then we were denied visas when we

flew to Macedonia; in Skopje we could

not get visas. We went to the border

and we were stopped by the Serbian

guards, who told us we could not get in.

It is unprecedented that three Members

of this Congress would be barred

from visiting another country. This is

the first time that I have been barred

and the first time I have heard of Members

of Congress being barred. But

again it shows the arrogance of the

leadership of the Serbian government,

particularly President Milosevic, who

has done the kind of atrocities in Europe

that makes one remember the

Nazi era, with the ethnic cleansing and

the genocide being perpetrated first on

the Bosnian Muslims, now on the Albanians,

a constant pattern of harassment

and killings and intimidation of

the Albanians.

The people of Kosovo I believe have

the right to self-determination, the

same self-determination we would want

for ourselves or for all free peoples

around the world. They have the absolute

right to determine their destiny.

They have the absolute right to determine

their political future if they want

to be an independent republic.

I personally, this Congressman support

them, and if they want to do whatever

they want to do as a free people,

they have the right to do so. The

United States must very strongly

stand with them. This House last week

passed a resolution sponsored by the

gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN)

and myself and lots of other people

calling on the Serbs to end their oppression,

condemning the Serbian oppression

against the Albanian majority

in Kosovo. The contact group is meeting

tomorrow. Under the able leadership

of Ambassador Gelbard and Secretary

of State Albright they will be

pushing for further sanctions on the

Serbian regime. They have to understand

that the people of Kosovo need to

be free, the people of Kosovo will not

tolerate and the people of the world

will not tolerate the wanton slaughter

of innocent men, women and children.

They went into villages and just

killed people. This is unheard of. We

will not stand by and allow genocide

and ethnic cleansing to continue. The

gentlewoman from New York (Mrs.

KELLY), the gentleman from Virginia

(Mr. MORAN) and myself all took very,

very strong stands. It was outrageous

that we were not allowed to go into the

border. We can only say that the Serbian

leader must be hiding something

because he does not want us to know

the truth.

To add insult to injury, while we

were not allowed to go to the border,

Mr. Milosevic’s forces jailed six Americans

on trumped-up phony charges,

jailed them and put them in prison.

Thankfully, those prisoners were finally

released yesterday after our

State Department intervened, after the

three of us made very strong statements

urging their release, and they

are here in Washington and we are

going to meet them in a little while to

have dinner with them, and tomorrow

morning we are calling a press conference

to let the world know what we

saw and the brutality that Milosevic is

putting onto the Albanian people. We

are going to have these Americans who

were imprisoned against their will join

us at the press conference.

I would like to now yield to either

one of my colleagues if they would like

to comment. We are going to spend the

next 15 minutes talking and comparing

notes and letting the American people

know precisely what is happening.