Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in expressing revulsion

at the deeply disturbing images that have ricocheted around the world,

showing abuses committed by members of the U.S. armed forces against

Iraqi detainees. I have seen first-hand the abuse of civilians and

others during wartime. I understand the dehumanizing humiliation that

can be perpetrated against an individual. At the same time, I also know

that if it were not for the bravery and heroism of the U.S. military, I

probably would not be walking on this earth--and there are countless

people around the world who could say the same thing.

It is important to keep in mind that the overwhelming majority of our

men and women in

uniform have acted honorably in fulfilling their duty in Iraq. They

have risked their lives and suffered personal hardship to fulfill their

responsibilities, and we continue to respect their sacrifices. These

loyal soldiers have been tainted by the appalling acts of a small

number of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, among the most important values that we as Americans

share are our profound respect for freedom and the rule of law, our

respect for the value and worth of the individual, and our commitment

to protect and respect human dignity. In this context, the images that

we have seen in the past few days were simply sickening to me. They do

not represent our American character. They do not represent the

selfless sacrifice of more than a hundred thousand American soldiers in

Iraq, trying to bring a new dawn to that country after decades of

nightmare.

On a purely personal level, I find the actions of these individuals

abhorrent. On behalf of all Americans, let me express my deepest regret

and apologies to all those who were wrongfully mistreated at the hands

of a few. There can be no excuse for these actions. Any American should

know that they are wrong. Indeed, the Geneva Conventions adopted after

the Second World War clearly prohibit this behavior and were accepted

by virtually every nation in the world to prevent these abuses.

But Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, these events are not merely about

wrongdoing by a few foolish and misguided individuals that caused

profound personal suffering. They have also damaged our credibility and

crippled our efforts to pursue critical national security goals in the

Middle East and around the world.

I welcome this resolution that we are considering today, Mr. Speaker,

but this resolution is not enough. We must take action to be certain

that such tragic and unfortunate actions do not occur again. Our

standing and our goals and objectives in the Middle East require that

we do more. The entire detention system in Iraq must be investigated

and those responsible for perpetrating these horrendous events must be

brought to justice.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for this episode is not only borne by

the few who committed these offenses. These events represent a failure

of leadership--not only in Iraq but throughout the chain of command. We

must determine where and why those leadership failures occurred, and

take appropriate remedial action. And we must also examine why it has

taken months for this failure to be addressed. The initial reaction was

slow and tepid at best. These atrocities should have generated an

immediate and powerful response.

Mr. Speaker, it is not enough to say that the Iraqi people are better

off today than they were under Saddam Hussein. It is not enough to say

that the atrocities and human indignities that were carried out by his

despicable and detested regime were more horrendous or more widespread

than what we have seen in the last few days. We are--and we should be--

judged by a higher standard. Because of our history and our commitment

as a Nation to respect for human rights, human dignity and the rule of

law, we must meet higher standards. This is who we are, and this is why

we are different.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this resolution today, but more

importantly, I urge our political and military leadership to act and to

act quickly and decisively to deal with these despicable acts and the

failures that allowed them. Our credibility as a Nation committed to

the rule of law and our efforts in the Middle East in the war against

terrorism are at risk.