Mr. Speaker, a very disturbing report emerged from Iraq

last week. According to press reports, medical students in Iraq will be

denied diplomas even though they have completed all of the coursework

and passed all of the required testing. This means that they would only

be allowed to practice in Iraq, and no other country will accept their

medical training or let them practice in the new country, even though

they have met all of the requirements.

This harkens back to the Iraq we knew under Saddam Hussein's rule.

Saddam refused to grant diplomas to medical students in order to keep

them in the country. Who would have thought that the new Iraq

government would resort to Saddam Hussein's old tricks? This is an

alarming and troubling trend, and it should be reversed immediately.

While dozens of international medical relief organizations have been

forced to leave Iraq because of serious security concerns, Iraqis have

fewer and fewer medical professionals available to them.

A well-known organization, Doctors Without Borders, related the story

of one doctor, Dr. Bassam. He is an Iraqi physician specializing in

orthopedic surgery living with his family in Baghdad.

His story says: Now, security issues have top priority for the few

existing financial resources, and medical needs are forced to take a

back seat. This morning, dozens of people were killed in Fallujah.

Yesterday, it was Baghdad. And that's not counting the wounded, who add

to the long list of emergency cases packing the hospitals. Every day

brings a new batch of dead and wounded. In this context, patients

simply cannot receive proper treatment from an increasingly overwhelmed

health care system. Some are forced to sell their car, or even their

house, to get certain kinds of care in the few hospitals able to

provide it.

That is the end of his story.

Mr. Speaker, instead of locking people in against their will, the

Iraqi government ought to be working with the international community

to make Iraq a safe and prosperous place where people want to raise

their families, where they want to stay, where they want to put down

roots and contribute to the local communities.

If this is going to happen, the United States must dedicate our

energies to bringing our troops home and to working with the Iraqi

people to stabilize their infrastructure and social programs, programs

that will provide health care, education and jobs. These are the most

important needs for the Iraqis.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, to bring our troops home. It is time to

provide a future of hope for the Iraqi people.