I thank the gentleman from Illinois for yielding me

this time.

Mr. Speaker, as a political refugee from a brutal, sadistic regime, I

know of the terrible crimes that dictators commit against their own

people. Yet after talking to survivors of Saddam Hussein's regime and

speaking with the teams who uncovered Iraq's mass graves, I was left

speechless in the face of such atrocities. The Iraqi dictatorship

indiscriminately slaughtered Iraqis but the women were among the most

vulnerable. The notorious Fedayeen beheaded women in public, dumping

their severed heads at their families' doorsteps. According to the

September 2001 report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur, at

least 130 Iraqi women were beheaded between June 2000 and April 2001,

in just 1 year. The regime used widespread rape to extract confessions

from detainees and would intimidate members of the opposition by

sending them videotapes of the rapes of their female relatives. At

times, family members were forced to watch those tapes.

However, Saddam Hussein's legacy of terror knew no boundaries. Even

small children were not spared the butchery as evident from the tiny

skeletons found in mass graves throughout Iraq. In 1998, the evidence

of the Iraqi regime's threatening behavior continued to mount and we as

Members of the United States Congress in a unified manner

overwhelmingly approved the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, calling for

the regime of Saddam Hussein to be removed from power and replaced with

a democratic government. By 2003 after 6 more years of Saddam's

oppression, the death toll had reached frightening proportions. The

U.S. could not watch idly and do nothing. As a Nation which stands for

freedom, democracy and human rights, we were compelled to act. Today as

a result of the President's resolve in Iraq and the courageous

dedicated service of our troops, the Iraqi people are free.

As Iraq's new female minister of Municipalities and Public Works said

last week to us: ``On April 9, 2003, Iraqis were offered the

opportunity to begin to dream their future.'' To determine if going to

war in Iraq and liberating the Iraqi people was the right decision,

just ask Dr. Khuzai, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council and

National Council on Women. After being prisoners in their own country

for 35 years, she told us: ``For the Iraqi women, the morale is so high

that you can't understand it unless you go and see. All the Iraqis are

very grateful to Mr. Bush and to the U.S. for liberating us from the

dictatorship regime. We will be grateful forever.''

Today, the United States is helping Iraqi women reintegrate

themselves into Iraqi society and, indeed, the outside world. Toward

this end, the administration has embarked on the Iraqi Women's

Democracy Initiative to train Iraqi women in the skills and practices

of democratic public life. It has also established the U.S.-Iraqi

Women's Network, helping to mobilize the private sector.

This is just the beginning. We will have a better, safer world for

the Iraqi people, especially for the Iraqi women, and for all.