



Congressional Record

United States
of America

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *113th* CONGRESS, 2nd SESSION

Vol. 160

Washington, Tuesday, July 8, 2014

No. 105

Senate

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BYTYQI BROTHER MURDERS IN SERBIA

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
OF MARYLAND

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, 15 years ago this week three American citizens--the brothers Ylli, Agron and Mehmet Bytyqi --were transferred from a prison to an Interior Ministry camp in Eastern Serbia. At that camp, they were executed and buried in a mass grave with dozens of Albanians from Kosovo.

Today, I again call upon the Serbian authorities to bring those responsible for these murders to justice. Belgrade has given us assurances in recent years that action will be taken, but no clear steps have actually been taken to apprehend and prosecute those known to have been in command of the camp or the forces operating there.

The three Bytyqi brothers went to Kosovo in 1999, a time of conflict and NATO intervention. Well after an agreed cessation of hostilities in early June, the brothers escorted an ethnic Romani family from Kosovo to territory still under Serbian control, where that family would be safer. Serbian authorities apprehended the brothers as they were undertaking this humanitarian task and held them in jail for 15 days for illegal entry. When time came for their release, they were instead turned over to a special operations unit of the Serbian Interior Ministry, transported to the camp and brutally executed. There was no due process, no trial, and no opportunity for the brothers to defend themselves. There was nothing but the cold-blooded murder of three American citizen brothers.

Serbia today is not the Serbia of 15 years ago. The people of Serbia ousted the undemocratic and extreme nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, and the country has since made a steady, if at times difficult, transition to democracy and the rule of law. In 2014, Serbia began accession talks to join the European Union, and in 2015 it will chair the OSCE, a European organization which promotes democratic norms and human rights.

I applaud Serbia on its progress and I support its integration into Europe, but I cannot overlook the continued and contrasting absence of justice in the Bytyqi case. The new government of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic has pledged to act. It must now generate the political will to act. The protection of those responsible for this crime can no longer be tolerated.

The surviving Bytyqi family deserves to see justice. Serbia itself will put a dark past behind it by providing this justice. Serbian-American relations and Serbia's OSCE chairmanship will be enhanced by providing justice. It is time for those responsible for the Bytyqi brother murders to lose their protection and to answer for the crimes they committed 15 years ago.