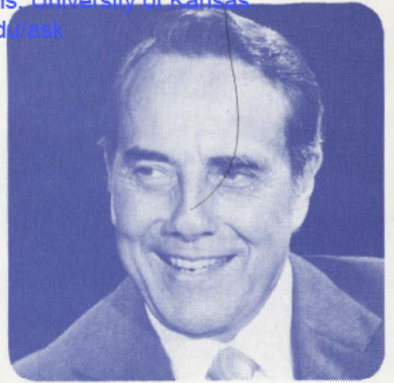


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOLE WELCOMES RELEASE OF JAILED AMERICAN IN KOSOVA;
SHABAN KASTRATI SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ARRESTED;
FED UP WITH SERBIAN OPPRESSION

ABOUT A WEEK AGO, I CAME TO THE FLOOR AND DISCUSSED THE TRAGIC HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN KOSOVA, YUGOSLAVIA WHICH I WITNESSED WHEN I LED A SENATE DELEGATION TO YUGOSLAVIA. IN THAT STATEMENT, I MENTIONED THAT THE POLICE STATE CREATED BY THE SERBIAN GOVERNMENT IN KOSOVA HAD NOT ONLY BEEN ABUSING THE RIGHTS OF THE ALBANIAN POPULATION LIVING THERE, BUT THE RIGHTS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS, AS WELL.

I TOLD MY COLLEAGUES ABOUT 19 YEAR OLD SHABAN KASTRATI, AN AMERICAN, WHO WAS ARRESTED BY SERBIAN AUTHORITIES ON AUGUST 29, THE DAY OUR SENATE DELEGATION VISITED PRISTINA, THE CAPITAL OF KOSOVA. ACCORDING TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT, HE WAS SENTENCED UNDER FALSE CHARGES TO SIXTY DAYS IMPRISONMENT.

I CAN SAY, AFTER SPENDING JUST ONE DAY IN KOSOVA SEEING THE OPPRESSION OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE THERE, I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT 60 DAYS IN A SERBIAN PRISON MUST BE LIKE FOR AN ETHNIC ALBANIAN.

BUT HAPPILY, AFTER SERVING ONE MONTH IN JAIL, SHABAN KASTRATI HAS FINALLY BEEN RELEASED. FOR THIRTY DAYS, I ALONG WITH MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES, MADE PHONE CALLS, SENT CABLES AND LETTERS ON SHABAN'S BEHALF. MOST RECENTLY, ACCORDING TO REPORTS, REPRESENTATIVE HELEN BENTLEY RAISED THIS MATTER WITH THE PRESIDENT OF SERBIA, WHILE IN YUGOSLAVIA FOR THE WEEKEND.

SOME MAY BE INCLINED TO BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF -- THINKING THAT THE JOB IS DONE NOW THAT SHABAN KASTRATI IS OUT OF JAIL. IT'S NOT. YES, SHABAN KASTRATI IS NOW A FREE MAN ONCE AGAIN, BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT SHABAN SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUT IN JAIL IN THE FIRST PLACE. HE WAS ARRESTED UNDER FALSE CHARGES, BEATEN AND IMPRISONED. IN OTHER WORDS, SHABAN WAS TREATED THE VERY SAME WAY THAT THOUSANDS OF ALBANIANS HAVE BEEN TREATED FOR THE PAST YEAR OR TWO.

IN MY VIEW, OUR JOB HERE IN THE CONGRESS IS NOT DONE UNTIL WE LET THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA KNOW THAT WE ARE FED UP WITH THE SERBIAN GOVERNMENT BULLYING NOT ONLY AMERICANS, BUT THE ETHNIC ALBANIANS WHO MAKE UP 92% OF THE POPULATION IN KOSOVA. WE NEED TO LET THE SERBIAN AUTHORITIES KNOW THAT THE FREE WORLD IS FED UP WITH COMMUNIST REGIMES AND TYRANNY AIMED AT TO CRUSHING DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS AND THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT THEM. WE ALSO NEED TO LET THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA KNOW THAT IT IS NOT WELCOME IN WORLD COMMUNITY AS LONG AS IT IS COMPLICITOUS IN PERPETUATING THIS HUMAN RIGHTS NIGHTMARE.

I AM RELIEVED THAT SHABAN KASTRATI HAS BEEN RELEASED. BUT, I AM CONVINCED THAT WE IN THE CONGRESS MUST CONTINUE TO WORK ON BEHALF OF THOSE STILL SUFFERING IN KOSOVA.

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