

in the face of such patriotism, so poignant the irony of the internment.

Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq, stated in August of this year that the detention of foreigners in Iraq and Kuwait is no different from the U.S. Government's internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. His spiteful words took a very deliberate stab at an old wound -- a wound that our meager words and this monetary restitution cannot ever truly heal. But we are bound by honor, and we believe in our duty to uphold the ideals expressed in our Constitution. We have recognized our error, and today, we face it squarely. May Hussein learn a lesson here.

Two years ago, we saw the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Adding to this tradition of commitment to civil rights, the Bush Administration has continued to support redress, and today proudly takes part in its realization. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 affirms this administration's deep commitment to protecting the fundamental principles of individual rights contained in the Constitution, in times of war as well as in times of peace.

This is an ongoing commitment, to which this Department and the Civil Rights Division, in particular, remain dedicated. In 1942, when Japanese Americans were the targets of discrimination, there was no Civil Rights Division. Today, when Arab Americans find their loyalty questioned, as has been reported in San Francisco, Chicago, and Michigan, with incidents of harassment and violence against American citizens of Arab ancestry, our response is immediate. The FBI, this Division, and local government bodies stand ready to protect our basic Civil Rights.

Regrettably, this is but one aspect of a troubling phenomenon which the entire nation has been witnessing: a startling rise in the number of Hate Crimes -- acts of violence by groups and by individuals based upon racial, ethnic, and religious bigotry. This bigotry is a poison which we in the Civil Rights Division will continue to fight wherever we find it. But we will also join with community leaders and law enforcement officials in the development of a national policy to enforce the laws that protect against such shameful crimes. Congress has recognized the need for action by passing the Hate Crimes Act, which will provide basic data necessary to identify these pockets of irrational and repugnant behavior, where ever they exist. For we must work together toward a society protective of the constitutional rights of all of its people.

Today, we acknowledge the faith, fortitude, and allegiance of the Japanese Americans who suffered the very personal injustice of the internment and the racial intolerance that fueled it.

Let me close by reading an excerpt from the Civil Liberties

Act, the "Statement of the Congress," which became the statement of the nation when this Act was signed into law:

"With Regard to Individuals of Japanese Ancestry
The Congress recognizes that ... a grave injustice was done to both citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry by the evacuation, relocation, and internment of civilians during World War II. ... these actions were carried out without adequate security reasons and ... were motivated largely by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. The excluded individuals of Japanese ancestry suffered enormous damages ... which resulted in significant human suffering... . For these fundamental violations of the basic civil liberties and constitutional rights of these individuals ..., the Congress apologizes on behalf of the Nation."

We take great pride in celebrating together today our shared trust in this nation, and our renewed dedication to the cause of liberty and justice for all upon which it was founded.