

Nomination of Samantha Power as Ambassador to the United Nations

Remarks by Chairman Robert Menendez

Senate Foreign Relations Committee – July 17, 2013

Good morning, Ms. Power. Welcome to the Foreign Relations Committee.

Your nomination as Ambassador to the United Nations has come with much fanfare -- and with some criticism, which -- at the end of the day -- means you must be doing something right.

But -- whether fanfare or criticism -- I don't believe anyone can question your credentials. No one can question your service.

And, certainly, no one can question your willingness to speak your mind -- often forcefully, always passionately, and usually without hesitation -- and I commend you for your willingness to speak out on human rights issues around the world, whether as a war correspondent in Bosnia, in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda and Sudan where you -- as you said in your Pulitzer Prize winning book on genocide -- witnessed "evil at its worst."

You have been an unrelenting, principled voice when it comes to human rights and crimes against humanity -- and I know that voice will be heard around the world -- should you be confirmed.

Personally, I am incredibly appreciative of the principled position you've taken on the Armenian Genocide. In 2007, you wrote in Time Magazine -- "*a stable, fruitful, 21st century relationship*" [with Turkey] "*cannot be built on a lie,*" and I completely agree.

Your belief that we should use the lessons of what clearly was an atrocity of historic proportions to prevent future crimes against humanity is a view consistent with my own and which is supported by your role on the President's Atrocities Prevention Board.

I agree that we must acknowledge and study the past, understand how and why atrocities happen, to put-into-practice and giving meaning to the phrase, "never again."

As the son of immigrants from Cuba, one whose family and friends bore witness to, suffered -- and continue to suffer -- under the Castro regime's oppression, I personally appreciate your commitment to exposing the Castro dictatorship's total disregard for human and civil rights and for not idealizing the harsh realities of communism in Cuba.

I know from the conversation we had in my office that you appreciate the suffering of the Cuban people -- the torture, abuse, detention and abridgment of the civil and human rights of those who voice their dissent.

I also welcomed your commitment to reach out to Rosa Maria Paya, daughter of the long-time dissident and Cuban activist, Oswaldo Paya who died under mysterious circumstances last year in Cuba.

Ms. Paya is in Washington this week accepting a posthumous award from the National Endowment for Democracy on behalf of another young activist from Cuba who died alongside Oswaldo Paya, making your commitment to reach out to her that-much-more timely.

I share your view that we should not lose sight of these moral issues even as we address the pressing economic and security issues that confront our nation.

It is fitting that you will be at the United Nations, which was created after a period of atrocity and conflict with the goal of bringing nations together to achieve peace and stability.

In the words of the UN Preamble, it was created *"to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small..."*

If confirmed your focus at the United Nations will -- no doubt -- be on the crisis du jour -- the Middle East, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, increasingly on North Africa, and the nature of nations that emerge from the Arab Spring but I would encourage you to also keep your focus and task your staff to watch what is happening off the front page as well as on it.

What may be happening on freedom of expression in Latin America; fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Africa; on the status of talks to resolve the 66

yearlong question of Cyprus; on women's rights in Pakistan; labor rights in Bangladesh, and human rights in Sri Lanka.

The UN for all its faults also has a great ability, to serve as arbitrator -- a neutral fact-finder -- and overseer of peace.

I urge you to harness its strengths in the interests of our nation and -- not coincidentally -- in the interest of fulfilling the stated purpose of the UN -- "*to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security.*"

We will address these issues, among many others, in our questioning, but let me to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Committee and to say that we look forward to a full and frank dialogue on the issues you will face should you be confirmed.

Let me also say -- for the record -- that if there are additional questions for the record of this nominee, they should be submitted by 5:00 PM today.

With that, let me turn to Senator Corker for his opening remarks.