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Republican Perspective

By John Littig

“Gonna take my problem to the United Nations”- “Summertime Blues” by Eddie Cochran, 1958

Here are some observations just to put our America and the world around us in perspective.

- The seven-decade Israeli-Palestinian conflict forges onward. Sometimes hot, sometimes less hot, but certainly a war without an end in sight.
- The Russian grip on its former satellites is re-tightening, and ethnic minorities are in revolt. There have been spectacular terrorist attacks within Russia, such as the Dubrovka theater in 2002 and the Beslan school in 2004. Of course, there have been more recent attacks, like the Volgograd train station in late 2013. In the Ukraine, street protests began in Kiev in November 2013 and have now spread throughout the country; the citizens want to lean west, toward Europe, but the government leans east, toward Moscow.
- It is reported that more than 200,000 North Koreans, including children and entire families, are imprisoned in forced labor camps. Their way out of their imprisonment is to die from torture, disease or malnutrition. Those outside the camps are also subject to starvation, because North Korean government policies subject their citizens to food shortages and famine.
- The Syrian civil war, which began in early 2011, has taken over 100,000 lives and resulted in millions being internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighboring countries. There has been at least one poison gas attack on civilians. This conflict is characterized by executions, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, kidnappings, and torture.
- Iran continues its march toward a nuclear weapon. Meanwhile, oppression by the government runs unchecked. Death penalty trials are frequently held in secret, with no meaningful appeals process. There have been dozens of executions so far in 2014, many for drug offenses. Public executions in Iran are usually carried out using a crane to lift the condemned person by a noose around the neck in front of a crowd of spectators. This

is a slower death by strangulation compared to the broken neck and relatively quick death resulting from a more conventional hanging. But the Iranian method probably has a more profound effect on the spectators.

There are numerous hot conflicts on the globe, some characterized by extreme brutality, often directed at civilians. There are even governments like North Korea and Iran that inflict torment on their own populations, including imprisonment and torture of entire families and, for good measure, public strangulations.

Against that perspective, the U.N. Human Rights Council is taking up an important human rights violation occurring right here in the United States. On Jan. 24, Ray Halbritter and Joel Barkin, both presumably straight-faced and representing the Oneida Indian Nation, met with U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic, and U.N. human rights officer Giorgia Passarelli.

Their complaint? The use of the name Redskins by Washington's NFL team. I kid you not.

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