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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

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• (1355)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): We will continue our proceedings of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

Mr. Silva, please.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the members of the committee. I have spoken to the members of the committee in relation to the motion that I will be putting forward. It's the new motion in relation to the Bahá'ís and the seven individuals of that faith who have been arrested without charge and are facing grave persecution in Iran.

It would be very important for this committee to move forward with this motion and show our solidarity and support, and unanimously support the motion put forward.

The Chair: All right. Is that debate or just...?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): No problem.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): I'm actually 100% in favour of this motion as it is and I'd be prepared to vote for it. It goes counter to Mr. Cotler's comment, and I apologize for that, but because of the nature of the situation and because I understand the power of this committee just by having hearings that are public, I'm wondering if we can have some witnesses from the Bahá'í community as soon as possible to speak to this issue as well. These charges mean the very life of these people who are involved, should they be prosecuted and found guilty. Of course we know the record of the Government of Iran.

Mr. Wayne Marston: It is critical to get something out of this committee today on this particular issue. I have no problem with witnesses at another time, but for the sake of these people.... Because justice, or what appears to be justice, moves very rapidly in that country.

The Chair: Any further comment?

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Excellent. It's adopted.

Yes?

Mr. David Sweet: Can I just ask you one more thing? At this Thursday meeting, could I seek consent that we have some witnesses from the Bahá'í community here and we can talk about planning again at a different meeting?

The Chair: Do you want to have Bahá'í witnesses on Thursday, or do you want to discuss having them on Thursday?

Mr. David Sweet: I'd like to call them. I think we're well aware of who represents the Bahá'í community in this city. If we can't, if they're not available, then that's another story, but I think we should attempt it because of the seriousness of the situation.

The Chair: All right, let's ask the question.

Is there a willingness to try to do that, or would people prefer to...?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: In that case, we'll do that, and we'll try to deal with our scheduling items.

An hon. member: Are there any names?

Mr. David Sweet: I have names.

The Chair: Sorry, I think Mr. Cotler wants the floor to discuss this.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): I agree with this. I just want to extend the thinking of Mr. Sweet. In terms of prioritizing, I think he was correct in what he said before. In my view, Iran today is the single greatest threat to international peace and security in a variety of ways. I think we should consider having hearings on what I would call the danger of a nuclear, genocidal, and rights-violating Iran. In each of those three areas, it represents a threat to international peace and security. We should therefore think of that as a priority area, to have hearings across the board touching on those subject matters.

The Chair: Do you need us to stay in meeting in order to take care of that, or can I gavel us shut?

There are two motions for Mr. Silva? There is just the one.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I guess I have one from him.

The Chair: All right. Yes, Mr. Hiebert.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): I would just support Mr. Sweet's suggestion that we have witnesses here on Thursday. Do you think that's possible?

The Chair: It's doable. We've all agreed to it. The question is who they are. The clerk is just trying to find out who they are. Mr. Silva has some names.

Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva: I can provide the name I have—Susanne Tamas. She is the national director. She can provide other names, but she would be the person who's most informed on this issue.

I don't know if Mr. Cotler has any other names.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: I agree with Susanne Tamas. You're correct. You can recommend others, but I want to also recommend Professor Payam Akhavan, who is a professor of international law at McGill University, himself of Bahá'í descent. He has followed the issues and knows them very well.

The Chair: Is there consent in the committee to invite those witnesses?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. We are done.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, can I ask you one quick question?

The Chair: Yes, you can, Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Unrelated to any of this, the Khadr report that the main committee had, have you heard any word about when they intend to retable that, if they're retable it in Parliament?

Ms. Melissa Radford (Committee Researcher): There's been no discussion of it in this session.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I know that Mr. Sorenson has it, and nothing else has been said.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Hiebert.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: In light of the witnesses who will be coming on Thursday, are we going to set aside time to continue the discussion of my motion to address the Dalit people of India?

The Chair: That's a good question. Are we going to find time in an hour? I personally think we should have the witnesses first and deal with any other items, including our scheduling and your motion and everything else, after that. Whether we'll have time, I honestly don't know the answer to that question.

All right, I'm going to say that we are dismissed until this Thursday.

● (1400)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Two hours or one?

The Chair: Just one hour, that's what we've got right now, but we're going to work at that meeting, if we have time after we've had our witnesses, to discuss future scheduling. I think I'm going to be chatting with people offline as well about that, because we may all have to make a few compromises.

The meeting is adjourned.

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