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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Colleagues, I'd like to bring this meeting to order. We have presenters today, some in the first hour, and others in the second hour.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study is on women, peace, and security.

For the record, our witnesses today are CARE Canada and Oxfam Canada. From CARE Canada we have Jacquelyn Wright, vice-president of international programs, and Margaret Capelazo, gender adviser for international programs. From Oxfam Canada we have Julie Delahanty, executive director.

Welcome to all of you. I think you've been here before us in the past.

I understand there are two presentations, one from each group, and then we'll go to questions.

I'll turn it over to you.

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright (Vice-President, International Programs, CARE Canada): Thank you very much.

It's really an honour to be here today, and thank you so much for inviting CARE.

CARE Canada is honoured to have been invited to contribute to the committee's deliberations on women, peace, and security.

CARE is a rights-based, international non-governmental organization. We support life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection, recovery and peace building, as well as longer-term development work. Last year, CARE's development and humanitarian projects reached more than 65 million people in 95 countries around the world. We continue to respond to the needs of people touched by conflict in Syria, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan, and elsewhere.

Our comments today are rooted in our on-the-ground experience working with women and girls affected by conflict. Women and girls are typically portrayed as victims of war rather than survivors and actors. It is well established, for example, that gender inequalities that exist in society before conflict are always exacerbated by conflict. Less attention is given to women's and girls' enormous contributions to the prevention of violence as responders when crisis hits and to the reconstruction and resilience of communities.

In CARE's experience, working with girls and women is indispensable for durable humanitarian and development interven-

tions. This requires policies and approaches that view women as agents rather than beneficiaries.

Involving women in key decisions on refugee camp design and management, such as where to build latrines in refugee camps, can help reduce gender-based violence. Involving women in humanitarian response and development projects cultivates their capacity to participate in decision-making and ensures that women's perspectives are part of the local governance agenda. Syrian women, for example, have demonstrated unimaginable strength and energy during five years of conflict and displacement. One in eight families in Syria and one in three Syrian households in neighbouring countries is now headed by a woman.

As women assume increasing responsibilities as income generators and decision-makers, domestic violence has increased. Adolescent girls throughout the region are being forced into marriage in order to reduce their families' expenses. In situations of extreme economic distress, cases of adolescent girls engaging in survival sex have also been reported.

As war and displacement trigger fundamental shifts in gender roles and responsibilities, however, women can transform the societies in which they live. Syrian women have supported food aid delivery, hygiene promotion, water management, community health, and many other humanitarian activities. They have also campaigned for a voice in peacemaking.

In post-Taliban Afghanistan, CARE has worked with some 9,000 widows through solidarity groups. These groups help women build a collective voice and to advocate for their needs, rights, aspirations, and entitlements. Some have challenged warlords over their right to land. Others have intervened to stop forced marriages in their communities. Such are the on-the-ground changes that the women, peace, and security agenda aims to inspire.

The evidence is clear that women's involvement in the development and application of policy and programs in conflict situations supports violence reduction and the prevention of conflict, the attainment and sustainability of peace, the effectiveness of humanitarian relief and recovery, and the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence.

Much has been achieved in the 15 years since the adoption of Resolution 1325. Thousands of women have used the women, peace, and security agenda to mobilize political action and resources in support of their rights and participation in peace and security efforts. Huge volumes of policy statements and reports have been issued on the women, peace, and security agenda.

The original and innovative spirit of Resolution 1325 has, however, often been lost in the process. Women's participation in discussions about how to respond to crises and rebuild communities remains inconsistent and often tokenistic.

There are, however, a number of practical steps Canada can take to translate the women, peace, and security agenda into impacts for women on the ground. ARE Canada offers three recommendations.

• (1535)

First, the Government of Canada should consider appointing a high-level authority on gender-responsive foreign policy. In his September 2015 report on women, peace, and security, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscored that national action plans' effectiveness depends on strong leadership and effective coordination. The 2013-14 progress report on Canada's national action plan reached similar conclusions. Other countries, such as Australia and Sweden, have created ambassadorial positions on global gender equality and rights.

A respected and visible Canadian authority could be mandated to do the following: coordinate and monitor the implementation of Canada's national action plan on women, peace, and security across departments; ensure that gender is central to Canadian diplomatic, peace-building, and development efforts; manage linkages with key processes, such as the 2030 agenda for sustainable development; and advocate for women's and girls' human rights.

The second recommendation is that the government should launch a cutting-edge, second-generation national action plan on women, peace, and security. The plan should have the status of a policy directive and be underpinned by dedicated and flexible funding, driven by results-oriented indicators, concrete targets, and timelines, and backed by robust monitoring and evaluation.

Reports on the implementation of the women, peace, and security agenda have repeatedly called for these elements to be included in national action plans. Adequate funding for women's civil society organizations is critical for building local capacities to engage in decision-making and to respond in emergency situations.

The Secretary-General, for example, has committed the United Nations system to allocate at least 15% of funding for conflict-affected areas for initiatives whose principal objective is gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender, age, and diversity disaggregated data, meanwhile, is critical for quality program design as well as for fostering accountability for investments, results, and impacts.

The third recommendation is that the government should lead efforts at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit to integrate local women's groups more meaningfully in a reformed global humanitarian architecture. The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May was conceived as a means to establish new ways to address global humanitarian challenges. A focus on women and girls at the summit provides an opportunity to revitalize the women, peace, and security agenda.

Canada can lead these efforts by championing efforts to empower local women's groups and ensure their involvement in emergency preparedness and humanitarian assessments, program design, quality, and accountability efforts. Canadian parliamentarians can

help set the stage by advocating for women's and girls' rights and agency, as humanitarian and policy actors in their own right, through their engagement with parliamentary counterparts, policy processes, and institutions around the world.

Conflict is always devastating for the individuals, families, and communities they affect, women and girls especially. Effectively integrated in our humanitarian responses, however, women can conquer new spaces within their families, communities, and nations that had previously been closed to them. Time and time again, CARE witnesses how women in desperate situations discover new strengths and capacities, how they acquire new degrees of self-consciousness and skills, and how they gain decision-making power within the household, their communities, and their countries.

Canada has long been a leader on women, peace, and security. As our national action plan comes up for renewal, amid new international attention on sustainable solutions to the world's most pressing challenges, Canada has an opportunity to reinvigorate its commitment to help ensure that women and girls are meaningfully engaged in developing and delivering responses to the multiple protracted crises confronting the world today, and to ensure that future policies and programs are driven by women's voices and aspirations.

• (1540)

I'd like to quote from what one Syrian woman recently told a CARE researcher: "If I had the ability, first, I would stop the death that is surrounding us. Then, I would think how to compensate all the affection that our children are missing. If I had the freedom to choose, I would choose a job for my husband first, then a job for myself that can ensure our family's stability. I wish to participate in decision-making in our society. I wish to learn English, then go to Damascus and join the English language faculty."

Such are the aspirations that the women, peace, and security agenda seeks to put into action.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Julie, I think you're next.

Ms. Julie Delahanty (Executive Director, Oxfam Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon.

Given Oxfam's focus on women's rights, we are particularly pleased to be here. Thank you for the opportunity. We applaud the committee for taking on this timely study of Canada and the women, peace, and security resolutions.

Oxfam is an international confederation working in 90 countries to support long-term development, humanitarian assistance, and advocacy and campaigns to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. In everything we do, we put gender justice and women's rights at the centre.

Oxfam is involved in programs and projects around the world that support women, peace, and security objectives. To name just a few, the young women peace-builders program in Colombia brings together young women to discuss and learn from each other's experiences. Together they are developing a national strategy to create a culture of peace in Colombia and present their ideas to the government. In Myanmar, Oxfam supports the women's initiative network for peace, which brings together women's organizations from diverse ethnic groups to support women's engagement in peace processes. In Afghanistan, our project trains both men and women on the importance of women's participation in society and on ways for women to access the formal justice system.

Last autumn the global community celebrated the 15th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. One of the overwhelming conclusions of these discussions was that progress on the ground has been disappointing. It's clear that implementation has lagged behind commitments.

How can Canada play a leadership role on women, peace, and security? Oxfam has identified six global areas for action. In each of these areas I have recommendations for Canadian priorities and actions.

First, we note the importance of international support for women's meaningful participation and leadership in all peace processes, in the security and justice system sectors, and in post-conflict reconstruction. A growing body of research documents how, when women are involved in peace processes, there is a greater chance of success, yet these processes continue to be closed to women and women's organizations. In recent years only 4% of signatories, 2.4% of chief mediators, 3.7% of witnesses, and nine negotiators were women. In Canada we could mobilize diplomatic support to ensure that women's organizations participate in a meaningful way in the Syrian peace talks, for example, and in all other peace processes. Canada could also provide support and training to these organizations so that they can increase their effectiveness.

The second area for attention is increased financing from donors and governments for implementing the women, peace, and security agenda. According to the United Nations, although there is a great deal of rhetoric supporting women, peace, and security, funding for programs and processes remains abysmally low across all areas of the agenda. This is a key dimension of leadership, so I have several recommendations.

First, increase the percentage of our development assistance in crisis contexts and our humanitarian spending that addresses women's needs and targets gender equality as its primary, principal objective. The United Nations has adopted a specific target for this type of spending. Their goal, as Jacquie said, is to have 15% of peace-building initiatives with women's rights and gender equality as their principal objective. Right now, the reports on Canada's action plan for implementing the women, peace, and security agenda don't provide this figure, so we do not even know what Canada is investing in and whether or not this amount has increased or decreased as a result of the action plan.

Second, we need to provide multi-year core funding and sizable grants for women's organizations. We need to ensure that the next iteration of the national action plan is fully resourced with a clear

budget and human resource allocations. Our current plan has no dedicated budget.

Our third area is more effective prevention of and responses to gender-based violence in crisis contexts. Globally this includes tackling the socio-political causes of gender-based violence, more support for gender-sensitive security sector reform, implementation of the arms trade treaty, and gender-sensitive strategies for counter-ing terrorism and extremism.

In recent years, Canada has spoken out, at the G8 and other international forums, on gender-based violence in conflict. We applaud the funding of various initiatives, including support for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. However, we believe Canada's investments in this area would yield stronger results with a clear strategy and greater investments in women's grassroots organizations.

One area of disappointment to many global organizations has been Canada's failure to fund the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including those relating to pregnancy during crisis. We are encouraged to note that the mandate letters to the relevant ministers include direction for a progressive stand on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

• (1545)

Our fourth area for attention is the importance of effectively addressing women's needs, rights, and roles in humanitarian responses. Oxfam's been working for several years to increase the profile and role played by women's organizations in humanitarian response. We're committed to promoting gender equality and women's rights in our humanitarian response by consulting with women, ensuring our programming is safe, and working with women's organizations from the start of the crisis to ensure that women's and men's different needs are understood and met equitably.

For example, we work with women to guide the design of the programs, from ensuring that the locations of water points are easily accessed, that communal latrines are safely separated and have locks, and that bathing and clothes-washing facilities are private. Hygiene messages for men and women, boys and girls, also need to be different. Oxfam tries to ensure hygiene or dignity kits contain pads so that women can manage their monthly periods in comfort and in dignity.

Our staff also co-authored and recently participated in the Canadian launch of the new guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action. To more effectively address women's needs, rights, and roles in humanitarian response, Canada could take concrete and specific measures to strengthen women's participation in humanitarian assistance, protection, and recovery programs. We could strengthen the capacity of partner governments to address gender equality and gender-based violence in national disaster risk reduction strategies and programs, require sex and age disaggregated data in all emergency response initiatives, and provide funding for training on the gender-based violence guidelines.

Our fifth area is greater international attention to conflict prevention and tackling the root causes of conflict. This is one area where the national action plan was particularly weak. One of the key insights of the women, peace and security agenda is that supporting women's leadership is a key lever in building more sustainable and peaceful societies.

In terms of Canadian priorities, this involves emphasizing conflict prevention and the role of women activists and women's rights organizations in conflict prevention in the revised national action plan, providing increased support to women's rights organizations working on peace-building, and ensuring that all efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism include agenda perspective.

Our sixth and final area is related to the effective implementation and accountability for women, peace and security commitments by the United Nations and member states. Bridging the gap between rhetoric and implementation requires stronger monitoring and accountability. In Canada's case our national action plan does have some positive features. It was the first national action plan to include indicators and assign responsibility for specific actions, but we could create new, much improved second-generation action plans.

First, we need an action plan that has ambitious priorities that are grounded in a rights-based perspective. The Canadian national action plan should outline how Canada will address the previous five issues I've highlighted.

Second, the independent mid-term review of the plan found that it doesn't seem to have a significant impact on Canada's overall policy direction with respect to conflict-affected and fragile states. This is an enormous weakness and requires efforts to increase its profile, including through the World Humanitarian Summit.

As mentioned earlier, we need a dedicated budget, including significant multi-year, consistent resources for women's rights organizations. We need to include a results focus. The current Canadian national action plan reports tend to focus on outlining activities, and there's little effort to understand if these activities are leading to much needed change on the ground.

Finally, we need to improve reporting. The progress reports on the national action plan have been consistently late, raising questions about the priority given to the plan within the government. Although the progress reports are full of details, they do not outline a clear picture of progress, challenges, and lessons.

In conclusion, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122 stated that UN member states were deeply concerned about

persistent implementation deficits in the women, peace and security agenda. It's time to move from deep concern to effective action. Canada has played a role, but this role has not been one of a global leader. It has not been commensurate with our national and international commitments to gender equality and women's rights. Our rhetoric has not been backed by sufficient resources and expenditures of diplomatic capital. We have the chance to change this. We urge this committee to recommend a bold and ambitious agenda for Canada, an agenda backed by resources, and an agenda that puts women at the centre of peace building.

● (1550)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, CARE Canada and Oxfam Canada. Those were very good presentations.

Colleagues, we have about 40 minutes. We'll go right to questions and start with the Liberal side.

Peter, you're on.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): We all want to thank you so much for being here today. It means a great deal that we have the opportunity as MPs to hear from experts and practitioners in the field.

I want to ask a question about microcredit, the issuing of small loans, particularly to women in places such as Bangladesh, as pointed to by development scholars and organizations such as Oxfam, which I believe has talked about it positively in the past. I'm not sure about CARE Canada, but you're nodding, so that probably means yes.

My question is not only with respect to the Bangladesh experience, but beyond that. In particular, I wonder about the value of microcredit in post-conflict settings. It's this idea of giving women small loans so they can start their own businesses. They lack access to collateral that they can put up to show a bank that they have something. Banks tend not to give out loans in these kinds of situations where poverty is the issue. I don't have to expand on that; you know the issues that are at stake.

Specifically for post-conflict settings, what might the merits of microcredit be, in your view? That question is a general one for anyone who wants to take it.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: Thank you very much for the question.

Microcredit has many uses. It also has some limitations, I think. It's certainly not a magic bullet. It has to be done in conjunction with broader programming around violence against women. There are a lot of issues about who controls the money. You have many issues there.

In post-conflict and humanitarian settings generally, it can be useful. We have a program in a refugee camp in Uganda. It's providing microcredit to help women in making menstrual pads, which are then being provided in kits for the community, so it has a double purpose.

When it's being used in a way that's both helping women to find ways to make income but is also making something of use to the community, and when that programming is connected to broader programming such as gender programming around women's rights, and also when it's really using women's rights organizations to deliver that kind of programming, it has also been found to be quite useful.

My colleague will take this question.

• (1555)

Ms. Margaret Capelazo (Gender Advisor, International Programs, CARE Canada): Yes, I'll add to that. Especially in relief and recovery contexts, how do you get to the legislature, how do you get to the justice department, and how do you get to health services in order to put forth a claim about gender-based violence to get justice? You have to take the bus. How do you get money to take the bus? You join a microcredit organization. You earn some money in the microcredit organization.

What happens if the other breadwinner in the family is absent or has died? What happens if you're a war widow or a woman who used to be in the war effort somewhere and is now ostracized by your community? All your community support is gone. How are you going to make a living for yourself? Join a microcredit organization.

I won't say that this is, in terms of justice, the first thing. As noted in the presentations, it's equally effective or more effective to also include women in local peace-building efforts, in local governance efforts on community development, or on village governance bodies. But along with that, it's extremely effective to have the economic means to be able to recover for yourself and your children.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: That's a great point. I obviously wouldn't think that it's a magic bullet, not to imply you were suggesting that I thought that. It's about empowerment, right? It's about making sure that women have a voice. Those are some great examples you've cited. I look forward to looking more into the situation in Uganda.

In the time I have left, Julie, you wrote an article recently for the *The Huffington Post* on the Zika virus, but there are so many overlapping issues there. I just want to take a quote from it, "Whenever crisis strikes in the world, women are the hardest hit—they are the poorest of the poor, the most unequal of the unequal."

You talk about the Zika virus with specific reference to Brazil, and then you make a connection between poverty, climate change, and disease and note how the poorest women are impacted by Zika. Not just because Zika is in the news, I think this speaks to a much broader issue, which is the interconnection between all these things: poverty, climate change, and health issues.

Can you expand on that? You can focus on the article if you wish, or you can answer in any way you like.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I wasn't expecting to talk about Zika here today, but that's great.

In any kind of crisis... I think at the time I wrote the article it was because it wasn't being highlighted, it wasn't coming out clearly, that the real issue around Zika, the real missing element, was men. Everyone was talking about women. There was this idea that women shouldn't get pregnant, to tell women not to get pregnant.

The absurdity of that statement was pretty obvious to many of us, especially those who work in the field and see the kind of access that women have to sexual and reproductive health services and the kind of powerlessness they have in negotiating sex with their partners. It was the whole idea of how you can tell a woman not to get pregnant. If they could do that, they would have done that.

In terms of Zika generally, women are living in the poorest circumstances there. They are more vulnerable to mosquito bites, poor health, and all of those things.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Could you touch on the point about family planning? When members of the general public, or even politicians sometimes, unfortunately, see something like Zika hit, they think this is just what happens over there. You actually make the point in the article that there are deep systemic issues here, issues of inequality, and you talk about family planning. Could you elaborate on that and tie it to Zika, or whatever. There are many issues we could talk about.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: It is not just Zika. It is an issue in many contexts, but particularly in humanitarian contexts, where humanitarian organizations go in, and it's about water, sanitation, latrines, shelters, and food. However, women don't stop getting pregnant just because there is a crisis, or an earthquake, or a conflict. Women menstruate and get pregnant. They have to have services and the ability to address the needs they have.

• (1600)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Hence there is the need for effective family planning policies and development policies.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. Now we'll go to the Conservative side.

Peter, go ahead.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both of you and your organizations for the magnificent work delivered over the decades. In my former life as a journalist, I had all too many opportunities to see both of your organizations and others share in the often very dangerous delivery of humanitarian services, both after natural disasters—the Haitis and the Ethiopias—and in areas of conflict.

I want to speak to Ms. Wright's point about the devastating impact on victims of natural or man-made tragedies, but also in the context... This may address your comments about the gaps in everything from Resolution 1325 to the most recent, with regard to women, peace, and security. What about those who deliver the aid for you and the greater risks that they have today in unconventional conflict, where sides do not negotiate? There are no winners and losers. Very often now we are seeing a phenomenon where a force will fight to absolute self-destruction if necessary. Will the increased funding and improved action plans better your ability to safely deliver to the recipients?

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: One of the points Julie brought up a couple of times was about local women's organizations and groups, and their role in conflict prevention, humanitarian response, etc. Gone are the days when a group of international expatriates descend on a community and deliver food and water. It is much more sophisticated than that. We work very closely in partnership with local women's and other civil society organizations. The extent to which their capacity is built, their empowerment and access to decision-making, to designing the humanitarian response, is a really key part.

In terms of actual care staff, whether they are international or local, particularly in these conflict situations, we have to go back to international humanitarian law and principles. Again, women's voices need to be heard on that stage, and they are not right now. In fact, it is quite the opposite.

There is no real way to protect either the people who are being affected or the workers helping them if there isn't some sense of humanitarian principles being first and foremost.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I'll add two small things.

One is about the knowledge of risk that the local organizations have. They have a much better sense of the risk on the ground, and so they're better able to manage those when we provide more support to local organizations rather than having that step-aside policy where humanitarian actors come in and move local organizations out of the way in order to deliver.

I think that's been a theme in the last few years in recognizing the importance of local organizations and how they work.

Another thing I'd point out, and I said it briefly in my comments, is around the arms trade treaty and the importance of signing and implementing that treaty. It would make people much more safe, especially women, because those small arms are used for gender-based violence.

The Chair: Mr. Clement.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion as well. I thank you very much for your presence here and your insights.

I wonder about the impact of corruption in some of the countries you're active in. Surely that's also an issue that has a direct impact on the ability of women to feel secure and to develop. Perhaps you could give some of your insights into what you've seen, how we can best tackle that with how we deliver aid, how we deliver our best practices, and those kinds of things.

• (1605)

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I'm sure I'll think of more after, but supporting public financial management in a country's general governance issues is something I think everybody is recognizing we need more of. Those revenues that would be gained by increasing the tax base should be used for supporting things like better public services that are free and fairly available to women, such as child care, things that would help with greater equality. Corruption is particularly stronger with the greater inequality that you have in countries. I think the kind of governance that's needed in a country and making sure that the revenues are being spent in the right places, through advocacy and through supporting civil society organizations

to advocate to their governments about what it is they need, including women's rights organizations.

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: I would build on that by saying working with local organizations is about partnership. Partnership is about building trust and knowing each other. Security is created through trust as well. Corruption often exists because you lack that and you work around the system. I think it's often less risky if you have that kind of relationship. You're not necessarily going to have that if you have a subcontracting relationship. I'm talking about true partnership.

Ms. Margaret Capelazo: I'll just add that there is a Chatham House study that came out for DFID recently that showed a correlation between women's participation in governance at national levels and other levels, and a decrease in corruption.

I'm not going to remember the statistic, but one of the reasons we're here today, and why we're putting the point on including women in peace negotiations and in governance, is that we can see in the work that we do a benefit not only to the issues that cause insecurity in countries in the first place, but with a more rapid response and recovery at the end the greater that women are included.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to Mr. Aubin now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us this afternoon and for sharing your expertise. Your presentation contained some very specific information that will help us in our analysis and our work.

So far, I have the feeling that we are talking about this a bit intellectually. I have never been out in the field, but you, you are our eyes on the ground. Could you tell us, giving an example, how Canada, through diplomacy or through a program ensuring stable, predictable, and recurring funding, could help you carry out your work?

It is well known that women are always the first victims. Specifically, on the ground, how could we go from action to protect women to action that would give them a status of important players in an era of change, especially in countries in crisis? Unfortunately, the crises are lasting longer and longer. I would like you to help us experience, for a few minutes, the reality of what is happening on the ground.

[*English*]

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: I think one of the best ways to understand that is to understand the root causes, or where the inequalities are happening.

I was just in Jordan. One of the things that struck me the most there is that most of the refugees are in urban settings, and we think of them in refugee camps. Urban refugees have a very specific set of circumstances.

We run a program where we do something like a case management, almost like social work, where a woman and her family can come to the centre, sit with a worker, and really look at what their needs are. Really, it's everything from protection, to children, to schooling, and we either provide some cash assistance or referrals or whatever.

In talking to those women, you really see what the impacts are, like the changing role of women. Men aren't able to work and they're now at home with the kids, and women are better able to access the informal working system by cooking or cleaning at someone's home. Suddenly the man is home looking after the children, which is a different way for them, and that becomes a tension in the family.

Another woman I spoke to was newly married and pregnant. There was a lot of physical abuse, and she decided to leave her husband and get a divorce. In order to receive assistance as a refugee, you need to be registered through UNHCR and have your registration card. Because of the way the UN system is set up, it was under the man's name, which meant that when she went to get divorced she no longer had access to any services because she didn't have her own card. She was not able to register herself until she got her court documents to say that she was now divorced.

Those are some of the real, practical things you see.

It's just about having enough money. You get a cash transfer. Well, what do you pay for? Hopefully, you're paying for the basics, such as shelter. Well, you're living in an urban situation where now you have to pay rent, and these are not the nicest of houses. These are often houses where things are just built on top. A tin roof is put on, etc. But then there is a medical emergency, so now you have to use the money you would have used for rent to go to the hospital.

Often it's women who are bearing the burden of all of those types of things that are happening, and it's a complicated web. If we don't recognize those needs, if we don't design our programs, we are discriminating against them and they're having even further difficulties.

I think those are some practical examples.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: Thank you for your question.

I will answer it in English.

[English]

In terms of examples, often there are women's committees in camps. We'll work to bring together all of the women to have a women's committee. In those committees, they'll talk about a lot of things.

In DRC we have these committees. They'll come together and talk about structures that are preventing them from accessing all kinds of things. They may talk about gender-based violence. They may even report it. Even if they don't, as I was saying in another meeting the other day, they're in a setting where they don't have therapists who are helping and giving counselling after gender-based violence. They don't have anti-depressants. They just have their sisters in an NGO

meeting, and sometimes that's what they need. That kind of programming does make a difference on the ground. It is important programming.

That's one set of things. Generally women's rights organizations, when it comes to....

Another study showed why there was a reduction in violence in countries. The number one indicator of lower gender-based violence in a country is not legislation. It's not policing and security. It's the presence of a strong women's rights movement and strong women's rights organizations in the country. Supporting that kind of organization does make a difference in some of these issues.

I think the most important thing is to talk to the women, which often is not something that happens. As I was saying earlier, where are their toilets located? What do they need? You don't know unless you ask them, and traditionally women often aren't asked. They're very straightforward pieces, those kinds of things.

Another one would be providing the kind of guidelines that have been created, UN guidelines, to be able to make those real and to provide that training. Those are not for gender advisers. They're not for health practitioners. They're for average humanitarian workers and those who are providing those services. It can give them ideas about how to see what some of the issues are for women.

Another area would be referral systems in a camp. When you come to a camp, you're told where the latrines are, that the food is delivered on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at such and such a time, and so on. We consider those basic needs, but we don't often talk about where the reproductive health services are, or where you can go if you've been raped. Those sorts of referrals aren't considered basic enough to be given through basic referral systems.

It's not hard stuff, really.

•(1615)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go over to the Liberal side, and Mr. Miller.

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

First, thanks to all three of you for taking the time to come and present to us. It's very insightful, and the testimony today has been very thought through.

Ms. Delahanty, I'd like you to touch on what you said on the government progress reports and the lack of specificity in what is allocated to gender inequality and women's rights. What are the key indicators that you're looking to see progress on from those reports?

Connected to that, what is the number you're looking for from government? You mentioned a 15% number, but what is the specific number in relation to that?

Ms. Julie Delahanty: That 15% of Canada's development assistance is—

Mr. Marc Miller: You're just saying any Canadian assistance, 15%.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: Well, that is what the UN is saying, 15%, so we're saying 15% for ours.

Mr. Marc Miller: It's what the UN is saying. Okay.

That was more the first question. I was just curious if you had an exact number.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: No, I don't have an exact number. I'm sure I could get one for you. If you call me, I can give it to you.

Sorry, what was the first part of your question?

Mr. Marc Miller: It was on indicators of progress that you're looking to see more development on in the progress reports.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: Well, it would be greater funding. That would be one part of the political progress. Right now we have just a series of activities. It's just put out as a set of activities that have been done. There's not really a link to what the results are of that activity.

I mean, as a charitable organization, when we ask for funding from the Government of Canada, we have to give quite, believe me, detailed responses around what kind of results we are achieving. We would like to see the same thing coming from the government. We do logic models and results-based and all that stuff, and we'd like to see that same kind of thing instead of just a listing of activities of what the government has or hasn't done.

Ms. Margaret Capelazo: There are actually UN indicators specifically for national action plans. Even if the first step was to use those UN indicators that are there for Resolution 1325, that would be great. The reason we quote 15% as the magic number is that we found that in resourcing projects such as these, that's the magic number where you begin to get a rollout of effective and sustainable programming. That's the resource base that is needed to get that effective and sustainable programming.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: May I add one more thing? It would also be really useful to have participatory approaches to finding out what indicators the women think are useful for that, doing more of that, asking women's rights organizations what they would see as success and then developing our indicators from that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Saini, go ahead.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, all three of you, for being here. I really appreciate your comments.

Because I have a medical background, I want to put this into a medical context.

Ms. Delahanty, you mentioned this during your remarks. In post-conflict situations we know that rape is sometimes used as a weapon of war. What can Canada do to ensure that women and girls are able to access both the mental health services and the physical aid they need, as well as ensure that they have the ability to access justice in the aftermath of these conflicts?

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I think the earlier point about money and referral pathways.... A lot of it exists in communities. It is part of that whole development, humanitarian.... It is divided, and trying to put that together isn't just about supporting local organizations; it is also about recognizing what already exists in communities, what is already there.

We have been doing long-term development work in most of the countries that have crises. Traditionally, what seems to happen is that

you go into a country, and it's like we forgot that we have been working on gender equality in that country for 20 years, that we have resources, that there is health care, and that there are women's rights organizations offering those kinds of services. It just sort of gets lost in the shuffle. Part of the narrative these days about linking those two is to make sure that there are those services that are often available, as well as justice. There are women who work on helping women get access to justice, which is a problem even in Canada. That is a bigger issue that we could talk about. I think it's just more money, better referral pathways, and better linking of long-term development with humanitarian....

• (1620)

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: I think one of the things you need to build in good humanitarian programming is safe spaces for women and children, where you can have some professionals and put together a good psychosocial program.

In that case management centre I talked about, for example, you can't sit and discuss your case with your children by your side, so you take the children away, and obviously they are suffering greatly. There are professionals who can provide a play environment where they can really express themselves.

Also, one of the vulnerable groups.... I know we are talking about women, but young adolescent boys are tremendously at risk. They are part of the family, part of what the women are trying to protect. It is really important to have safe spaces for those young men, too, to be able to express their anger and disempowerment.

The Chair: This is the end of the first round. I want to go to the second round, so we'll go back to the Liberals. We will go to five-minute rounds.

I think it is your turn, Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you so much. There is a lot of knowledge and a lot of hard work behind it.

With any natural disaster, how come the numbers are high for women and girls? You touched a bit on the issue that accessibility to the medical system is not there. What is the reason for the deaths, and what can we do to prevent the high number of deaths of women and girls?

Ms. Margaret Capelazo: Studies show that women are the last to leave and the first to return. Being the last to leave, you are in the most dangerous position, and being the first to return, you are in the position where things are the least stable.

Studies also show that women are actually less visible than men. We are not thinking about them so much when we do search and rescue operations. You can take a look at this on YouTube, if you want to. The videos are there to show that in disasters like the one in Sri Lanka and a couple of other places there is a woman sitting on the roof and waving, and there is a man sitting on the roof and waving, and the helicopter picks up the man. That's why.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I'd also add there is a broader issue around poverty and vulnerability. The people who die the most in humanitarian crises are the poorest and the most vulnerable, and the people who are the most poor and vulnerable are women. There's a direct correlation. If you're in a country where there's a lot of flooding, the richer people will live on the hillside and the poorer people will live in the flatlands. If you have a country that has a lot of mudslides, it's the other way around. It's where the poorest are located. There are disasters all over the world, but where people die is where they're the poorest. That correlation is the same. The most vulnerable and the poorest are women.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Where is the improvement then? If a chopper is picking up a man, who's calling those shots?

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: Good question.

Ms. Margaret Capelazo: I will point to some good work done by Tufts University and a number of other organizations, and Julie referred to the inter-agency standing committee work on gender equality in humanitarian action.

One of the reasons all three of us are now going to mention collecting sex and age disaggregated data is that one of the best ways to make progress so that people are counted in—elderly, children, and women; all three—is to make sure that when we're doing data collection, and even at the beginning of a project or at the beginning of considering a response, we're asking the questions seriously: How many men? How many women? How many boys? How many girls?

Some of my colleagues in the organizations where I'm training get tired of my asking these questions over and over again. I ask them because that's where the improvement lies, in being able to intentionally count women or the elderly in. A number of agencies under the UN are leading the charge on trying to make sure this happens.

● (1625)

Ms. Julie Delahanty: To me it's not about who's calling the shots or who's saving those few people. It's about the structural inequalities, including gender inequalities that are leading to that vulnerability for women that has to be addressed on a much broader level.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clement, please.

Hon. Tony Clement: I want to get your perspective. You were talking about, either directly or indirectly, the social determinants of health and their impact on security as well. Of course, we've had a signature initiative since 2010, the Muskoka initiative on maternal, newborn and child health. I would love to get your perspective on what's working with that, what isn't working, and those kinds of things.

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: In relation to disasters?

Hon. Tony Clement: It's a question of building up capacity and giving mothers and newborns a better ability to survive in difficult circumstances. In terms of your work, what have you observed with respect to Canada's contribution on that?

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: I'm going to link these two points, because one of the things that's important is disaster risk reduction,

including prevention of any kind, whether it be in training mothers, or giving access to infrastructure and medical facilities, etc.

Women can be trained and it can create a resilience in a community, which then allows for fewer deaths in a natural disaster. Particularly, I think that in health disasters women who are better prepared and whose children are better nourished stand a better chance of being more resilient. There's a medical aspect, of course, to the maternal, newborn and child health program, but there's also work around gender equality and creating the situation where men are supporting women's health and children's health, and creating the enabling environment for that. It really has built resilience in communities.

Hon. Tony Clement: Go ahead.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I think the maternal, newborn, and child health initiative really helped initially to raise the profile of some of the issues around particularly maternal health, although ultimately, I think there was a bit of a lack of attention.... The attention focused much more strongly on child health and child nutrition rather than on maternal health. I've always said, where's the "W" in MNCH? That was an issue. Women have many needs, and they have rights, and we did a disservice, in some sense, by not supporting women who have many, many needs, particularly in crisis situations.

We still don't have enough money. A certain amount of money went in the context of a declining ODA budget. We're very far from 0.7%. I think we need to keep on pushing for that, because we could do a lot more for women and children if we were actually paying our fair share.

The Chair: Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you.

To the organizations, thank you very much for the work you do and for being here today.

To follow up on Peter's comments, I believe that both micro-finance and microcredit are huge. I think they're very important. You guys talked about that. When you look at some of these initiatives, should micro-finance or microcredit be a part of it when you're looking at the programming for women in general? If we don't have the economic piece right...

It talks about all the things that are so difficult coming down the road. As Peter said, it's not a silver bullet. It won't fix everything, but in terms of programming for women, would this be one of the economic ones, or one of the tools we should be trying to use, when we look at programming overall?

● (1630)

Ms. Jacquelyn Wright: Absolutely. One of the cornerstones of CARE's programming across many different sectors, whether it be food, nutrition, security, humanitarian, or maternal, newborn, and child health, is that we use sometimes a village or savings and loan association type of programming. As was mentioned earlier, women in these situations often can't access the microcredit. They don't have collateral.

This is a step before that. It brings together a group of women who save money together, lend out money to each other, and slowly, over time, build their economic ability and work their way up to a more microcredit type of situation. When you do that, you also build a group who comes together in camaraderie. They find that they can meet a lot of needs that way, and not just economic needs. It also becomes a platform for engaging in other issues. It's a platform for talking to men about the sharing of household duties. It's a platform for talking about gender-based violence.

It's a real cornerstone to all the kinds of programming we do, where you can really work with these women's groups, hear their voices, and support them in the most basic of ways.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: I would just say that it can be excellent programming, but we shouldn't be assuming that it is for women. We should be asking the women what it is they need in their communities and what is the most important thing. I would say that microcredit is very useful for what we call the entrepreneurial poor, but for the most vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, the extreme poor, it doesn't necessarily work for them. They need asset transfers, not microcredit.

When you're helping within those communities, I think being really cognizant about who you're helping is really useful.

The Chair: Colleagues, thank you very much.

Now that our hour has wrapped up, I want to take this opportunity to thank both CARE Canada and Oxfam Canada for very good presentations. They will be very helpful.

There is one issue I'd like you to think a bit about and maybe write back to us on. I'm very interested in your comments about women remaining largely excluded from the peace process. I'm curious to know what the key factors are to change that.

I was just thinking out loud to myself, and I'll say it to you, does that mean Canada doesn't have any women negotiators who are working on this, or are you speaking specifically about the negotiators in some of these troubled countries? I want to get your sense of that, and on ways that Canada could participate in and help make that change. That would be interesting for us to hear. Obviously we'd like to see more women involved in the peace process. That's part of what we're looking at here.

Knowing that this is a very large question to answer, I would very much appreciate it if you could get back to us in writing, in some fashion, to give us some direction and ideas on how we might do that as a government and as a Parliament.

Ms. Julie Delahanty: Invite them.

The Chair: That's the easy answer, yes.

Having said all of that, thank you very much. I appreciate your presentations and the quality questions by my colleagues.

I'll take a five-minute break, and then we'll go to the next presentations. Thank you very much.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1640)

The Chair: First of all, colleagues, pursuant to the Standing Order 108(2), this is a briefing on the campaign for Sergei Magnitsky and other issues.

The witnesses today are Mr. Browder, the head of the International Justice Campaign for Sergei Magnitsky and the author of *Red Notice*, and Zhanna Nemtsova, Deutsche Welle correspondent and founder of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom, and Vladimir Kara-Murza, the coordinator of Open Russia and deputy leader of People's Freedom Party.

Welcome to our committee.

I understand, Zhanna, you want to make some comments. You'll go first, and then I'm not sure what the order is; there is no written... which is unusual. If the committee is accepting of that, we'll carry on.

Is everyone okay with that?

All right, that's fine with me too.

I'll turn it over to the witnesses, then we'll go through our usual presentations from the witnesses, and then over to the different members of the committee.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Zhanna Nemtsova (Deutsche Welle Correspondent, Founder of The Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

Good evening.

I have my statement written, but only electronically.

Thank you for the presentation. I'm a Deutsche Welle reporter, but I'm also the eldest daughter of Boris Nemtsov, who was assassinated more than one year ago in front of the Kremlin walls.

In 2012 he visited Canada to campaign for the Magnitsky Act. Before visiting Canada, he wrote an article with Vladimir Kara-Murza for the *National Post*. It was called "Standing up for freedom In Russia", where he said, "While the current regime is in power, Russian citizens can only defend themselves through international mechanisms."

That is true. Until 2013 Russia was the leader in terms of the number of applications filed with the European Court of Human Rights. According to the recent polls conducted in Russia, over 50% of Russians do not believe that my father's case would be fully solved in Russia. Thousands of Russians signed a petition to initiate an international control over the investigation into my father's murder.

When my father was assassinated, I had little hope that his murder would be solved in Russia. My expectations have so far been proven true.

I started to look for international mechanisms, or at least international control over the investigation, that could be applied in this case. I found very few of them. Even those that could be used, such as a special rapporteur within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, are not easy to implement.

It is so-called real politics, and politicians tend to be reluctant in taking action on such issues as human rights abuses in Russia. That's why this enables the Russian government to block the most high-profile assassination in modern Russian history and provide impunity for those who might be involved, including the ruler of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov. Moreover the Russian government encourages the criminal behaviour as long as these people are loyal to Mr. Putin.

Of course I understand there is lack of progress, but I'm still dedicated to solving this crime and to having justice for my father. I think in this case, and I strongly believe, that more international mechanisms should exist that can be used by the Russian citizens to bring justice and accountability to the Russian authorities in Russia. Otherwise, gross violations of human rights will persist in Russia. We're not talking about only political prisoners, but we are talking about death threats and the fact that Russian politicians and the leaders of the opposition might be killed in Russia.

Thank you.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kara-Murza.

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza (Coordinator, Open Russia and Deputy Leader of People's Freedom Party, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable members of the committee, thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you today.

In 1991, 25 years ago, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, of which both Russia and Canada are full members, adopted the Moscow document, which upheld explicitly that human rights are not internal affairs but are subject to international obligations by member states. Under Vladimir Putin's government, the Russian Federation has made a mockery of these obligations in all the fundamental spheres of the human dimension.

Elections in our country have become a meaningless ritual for confirming the incumbents, with the opposition candidates routinely disqualified from the ballot, and the voting process itself marred by administrative intimidation, overwhelming media bias, and pervasive fraud. For instance, in the most recent parliamentary election, in 2011, up to 14 million votes, according to independent estimates, were stolen in favour of Vladimir Putin's party.

For more than a decade now, the Russian Parliament has been a decorative institution, devoid of any real opposition to the regime, "not a place for discussion", in the unforgettable words of its own former speaker.

The same applies to Russia's largest media outlets today. Since the early years of Mr. Putin's rule, the state has taken over or shut down every single independent nationwide television channel, and TV

channels have become outlets for the official propaganda, used to rail against so-called external enemies, which is mostly western countries and more recently Ukraine, and against Mr. Putin's political opponents inside Russia, us, who are denounced as traitors and foreign agents.

Many of the regime's opponents today are behind bars. According to the Russian human rights centre Memorial, which is probably the most respected human rights organization in our country, there are currently 53 political prisoners in the Russian Federation, and that's using the high standard established by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1900.

These include opposition supporters jailed under the infamous Bolotnaya case, for protesting against Mr. Putin's inauguration on the streets of Moscow in May 2012. They include Oleg Navalny, the brother of anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, who is basically held as a hostage. They include Alexei Pichugin, the remaining hostage of the Yukos case; Sergei Udaltsov, the leftist politician; and Ildar Dadin, a pro-democracy activist, who was recently sentenced to three years in prison for staging one-man protests on the streets of Moscow. There is a new law that targets street protesters. He was the first one convicted under it. Of course, they now also include citizens of Ukraine seized during Mr. Putin's military aggression against that country, most famously, or I should say most infamously, Nadia Savchenko, whose show trial is currently under way in southern Russia.

Of course, as you well know, disqualification from the ballot, slander in state-run media, and even prison are no longer the biggest dangers that face those who dare to oppose Vladimir Putin's regime. On February 27 last year, the leader of Russia's pro-democracy opposition, former deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov, was gunned down, killed by five bullets in the back, as he walked home over the Bolshoi Moskvoretsky bridge, just 200 metres from the Kremlin wall, in what is probably the most secure area not just in Moscow but in the whole of Europe. Boris Nemtsov was the strongest, the most prominent, and the most effective leader of the democratic opposition in my country, and his murder left an enormous void in the democratic movement. The tens of thousands of people who came out on the streets of Moscow two Saturdays ago to walk in the memorial march in memory of Boris Nemtsov are testimony to this.

I am very fortunate and very happy to be able to appear before you today. Last May I slipped into a coma, as a result of a severe poisoning of unidentified origins that led to multiple organ failure. Tests showed an abnormal concentration of heavy metals in the blood, and medical experts told my wife the chances of survival were 5%. I am certainly very happy to be here. I have no doubt that this was deliberate poisoning intended to kill, and it was motivated by my political activities in the Russian democratic opposition, likely including my involvement in the global campaign in support of the Magnitsky Act.

As you know, that law, which was passed in the United States in 2012, established a groundbreaking precedent by introducing for the first time ever personal accountability for human rights abuses. These are not sanctions against a country or even a government. These are sanctions against specific individuals responsible for corruption and for abusing human rights. That law introduced visa sanctions and asset freezes against people involved in the arrest, torture, and death of Moscow lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who uncovered a large tax fraud scheme involving state officials—Bill Browder will speak in more detail about this—and also against people involved in other human rights abuses.

• (1650)

It is an honourable law, and it is a pro-Russian law in my view. It's a law that targets those who abuse the rights of Russian citizens and who steal the money of Russian taxpayers through official corruption.

It is also a very effective law, because for all the many similarities that we can discuss between the Soviet regime and what we have today under Vladimir Putin—and there are many similarities, as I mentioned, such as political prisoners, the lack of free and fair elections, media censorship, and so forth—there's also one very important difference. The difference is that while they were persecuting dissenters, harassing their opponents, and putting them in prison, members of the Soviet politburo did not keep their money in the west, did not educate their children in the west, and did not buy luxury real estate and yachts in the west. People in the current regime like to do that, both officials and Kremlin-connected oligarchs and kleptocrats. This double standard has to be put to an end.

Those people who openly trample on the most basic norms of the free world should not, in my view, be allowed to enjoy the privileges that the free world has to offer.

Back in December 2012, Boris Nemtsov and I published an op-ed here in Canada in the *National Post*, which Zhanna has already referenced. It was entitled “Standing up for freedom in Russia”. It called on the Canadian Parliament back then to adopt its own version of the Magnitsky law. The article states:

Canada has an opportunity to lead — just as it has led on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — by adopting the Magnitsky legislation.... The task of democratic change in our country is ours and ours alone. But if Canada wants to show solidarity with the Russian people and stand for the universal values of human dignity, the greatest help it could give is to tell Kremlin crooks and abusers that they are no longer welcome.

This is a message I would like to reiterate before you today. I hope our friends and our overseas partners here in Canada will act to stop this impunity for the crooks and the abusers, and will support this legislation in memory of Sergei Magnitsky and also in memory of Boris Nemtsov.

Thank you very much once again for the opportunity to appear before you.

The Chair: Mr. Browder, please.

Mr. William Browder (Head, International Justice Campaign for Sergei Magnitsky and Author of Red Notice, As an Individual):

Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you today and for your continued focus on the murder of Sergei Magnitsky and the efforts that I and my colleagues have embarked on to get justice for Sergei Magnitsky and for the other victims of human rights abuses in Russia.

As many of you know, Sergei Magnitsky was murdered on November 16, 2009, about six and a half years ago, after being tortured for 358 days after being unjustly arrested for accusing Russian officials of being involved in the largest tax refund fraud in Russian history. The evidence of his murder and his torture is well documented and overwhelming.

In spite of that, the Russian government exonerated every single person involved. It gave special state honours to some of the most complicit and, in the most absurd legal nihilism probably in the history of Russia, they then put Sergei Magnitsky on trial three years after they killed him, in the first-ever trial against a dead man in the history of Russia.

It became obvious that the only chance of justice was justice outside of Russia.

The people who killed Sergei Magnitsky killed him for money. They killed him to cover up the theft of \$230 million.

Those people don't like to keep their money in Russia; they like to keep it in the west. They like to keep it in real estate in Toronto, in bank accounts in Zurich, and in villas on the French Riviera. They like to travel, to send their kids to boarding schools in the west, and to send their girlfriends on shopping trips, and they like to be on vacation themselves. So we came up with this idea of naming the names, freezing the assets, and banning the visas of the people who killed Sergei Magnitsky and the people who commit other gross human rights abuses. It became known as the Magnitsky Act.

I launched this initiative in Washington on a bipartisan basis with Senator Benjamin Cardin of Maryland and Senator John McCain of Arizona. I launched this effort in conjunction with Irwin Cotler, who's sitting right here today and who is a colleague of yours, and I launched it in the European Parliament and in various other places.

One of the principal arguments that the Russian government made to try to stop this from happening was that this law was anti-Russian. I could scream until I was blue in the face that it wasn't anti-Russian, but the person who showed up and helped quash that argument was Boris Nemtsov. Boris Nemtsov, the leader of the Russian opposition, showed up in Canada, in the United States, and in Europe, and said that this was not anti-Russian but pro-Russian. He said that it was anti-Russian for Russian officials to steal from us and then kill us, and that it was pro-Russian to go after those people on a targeted basis and sanction them for doing that.

Boris Nemtsov went around to all these different law-making bodies. So did Vladimir Kara-Murza. As we know, a year and two weeks ago, Boris Nemtsov was murdered in front of the Kremlin.

Vladimir and I were in the House of Representatives about two months after Boris was murdered. At that point, the Magnitsky law had passed in America and had become a law. We were asking the Congress to put on the Magnitsky list the people who were involved in calling for Boris Nemtsov's assassination. Vladimir, shortly after that, was poisoned in Moscow. He went into a coma and multiple organ failure, and his doctors suggested that he had a 95% chance of dying and a 5% chance of living. It's only through an act of God that Vladimir is sitting here next to me today, having survived this unbelievably terrible ordeal.

●(1655)

The situation in Russia since we started this campaign for justice for Sergei Magnitsky and justice for other victims of human rights abuses has become dramatically worse. Whatever restraint Russia had in previous times has all but disappeared. We're now in a situation where there's total and absolute repression.

In March of last year, I came to Canada. With Irwin, and with a number of people who are sitting here today, a resolution was put in front of the House calling on the Canadian government to impose a Canadian version of the Magnitsky Act. There was a unanimous vote in favour by the House. There was also a unanimous vote in favour by the Senate. I was promised by the foreign affairs minister and the immigration minister at the time that the government would impose a Magnitsky act for Canada.

I had meetings with the lawyers working in the foreign affairs ministry to discuss the mechanics of it, and then, sadly, the mandate of the government ended and we were not able to get the Magnitsky act fully implemented.

During the election campaign, my colleagues and I went to every party—the Liberals, the NDP, and the Conservatives—and asked them whether they would support a Magnitsky act. Every party put it in writing that they would support a Magnitsky act if they formed a government. The Liberal Party won the election and formed a government. Moments after the government was formed, I said to Irwin, “Let's go back to Ottawa and get the government to fulfill their campaign promise.” Irwin said, “Let's wait until everybody has found their seats.”

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. William Browder: I was raring to go, and finally he could hold me back no longer. Two weeks ago, I came to Ottawa and met with about three dozen members of Parliament from all the different parties to see whether we were still onside, whether there was still the same amount of support, and I would say that the support has only become stronger. Not a single person I met with didn't support the idea of a Canadian Magnitsky act.

I also had meetings with members of the government, and I didn't get the same passionate response as I got from members of Parliament. Nobody said no, but nobody said yes. What I would hope for is that the new government would take this Magnitsky act and put it into place.

Mechanically, there's a way to do that. There's current sanctions legislation that's already in place, SEMA, the Special Economic Measures Act, which currently doesn't have the ability to sanction human rights abusers. The proposal we had in the previous version,

before the end of the last government, was to make a Magnitsky amendment to the SEMA that would target the human rights abusers and allow them to name names of the human rights abusers and to impose visa sanctions and asset freezes.

That's what I'm here today to ask for. I'm asking your committee to support a call on the government specifically to amend the SEMA legislation and to call for a Magnitsky amendment. That would effectively close the loop we started so many years ago and would allow this country to sanction the people who killed Sergei Magnitsky, the people who killed Boris Nemtsov, the people who poisoned Vladimir Kara-Murza, the people who illegally took Nadiya Savchenko hostage, and many others.

It's a cost-free policy. It doesn't cost anything. It would put Canada in a strong moral leadership position, and it's something that was promised to us and should be done.

Thank you very much.

●(1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much to all three of the witnesses.

This is very much appreciated. It's a very difficult subject for sure, for Zhanna in particular and obviously for Mr. Kara-Murza. When he tells us that there was a 5% chance of living, it's pretty shocking that he's sitting in front of us here today.

With your presentations done, I'd like to turn it over to the committee for their questions and comments.

I understand that Mr. Allison is going to start.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Chair, I have a motion that I want to put before the committee. I know that we're going to do some questions, and I'm wondering if we would have a chance to discuss the motion at the end of questions today. I could read the motion into the record.

I have a couple of questions, but before that, Bill, I know that we've had a chance to meet, first back in Europe with the OSCE. You've been a champion for this. The question I have for you is, why is this important? You alluded to it and you've talked about it. Why do we need to do something like the Magnitsky law? What benefit does it have? What does it accomplish?

●(1705)

Mr. William Browder: Right now, basically, you have total impunity in Russia for people who persecute opposition members, whistle-blowers, and other types of people. The bad guys in Russia get away with it. This piece of legislation is something that we in the west can do and that targets something in the west that they covet, which is their ability to keep their money safe and to travel here.

It's within our jurisdiction, doesn't cost anything, and it touches them in the most profound way. I know for sure that it's an effective piece of legislation, because when it was going through the U.S. Congress, Vladimir Putin named stopping it as his single largest foreign policy priority.

This is something we can do in a time when we're all looking on, watching TV and reading the newspapers, thinking to ourselves that it's terrible what's going on over there, and asking what we can do about it. This is something we can do. It's something within our grasp. It doesn't cost anything.

Mr. Dean Allison: What I'd like to do is read this motion for you: "That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development recommend to the House, in its statutory review of the Special Economic Measures Act which is up for review as of March 23, 2016 as mandated by section 20(1) of the Freezing Assets of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, as proposed during the 2nd Session of the 41st Parliament, by former member of Parliament Irwin Cotler in section 3 of Bill C-689, an act to enact the global human rights accountability act and to make related amendments to the Special Economic Measures Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which authorizes Canada to publicly identify and impose sanctions, in the form of banning visas and freezing assets of human rights violators, including those individuals responsible for the persecution and murder of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, democratic opposition leader Boris Nemtsov and the imprisonment of Ukrainian pilot, Nadiya Savchenko, who has been held hostage in Russia for 21 months."

We'll distribute the motion. I would just ask the chair if we could have some time at the end of the session to talk about the motion.

The Chair: Yes, that's fine.

Mr. Allison has told you what he's proposing as a notice of motion that was presented a while back, but it won't be discussed until after the witnesses, at the end of the meeting, as per our procedure. It's a notice of motion. He's put it in his summation of questions.

You have about another two minutes, Mr. Allison.

Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

Thanks to all of you for coming and for your extremely articulate presentation of the realities in Vladimir Putin's Russia today.

Could I ask you to give a brief example of the effectiveness of the American sanctions under the Magnitsky Act on those individuals who have been listed and prohibited?

Mr. William Browder: Yes. There are currently 39 people on the U.S. Magnitsky list. Their names have been publicly listed on the U.S. Treasury OFAC registry. Their visas have been cancelled and their assets have been frozen.

Most importantly, as of the moment your name goes onto the U.S. Treasury sanctions list, there's no bank in the world that wants to violate U.S. sanctions. They are able to close their accounts for any person on that list. I'm not just saying that about U.S. banks: it's any bank. No bank wants to be in violation of U.S. sanctions.

If you're on that list, you can no longer open a bank account and you can no longer operate a credit card. No international company will do business with you. Effectively, you become a financial pariah in the world. Also, even though this is just about U.S. travel bans, many other countries look at that list and deny visas on the basis of that list, so all of a sudden, your travel opportunities become limited.

Most significantly, we all know, and they all know in Russia, that eventually the Putin regime will fall. The current plan of all the bad guys in Russia is that when the regime falls, they will flee to the west and enjoy their ill-gotten gains in the west. But if you're on that list

on a public registry, you can't flee anywhere, because when you flee somewhere and ask for a long-term visa or for asylum and the asylum officer types your name into the computer, he's going to say, "Wait a second. You're not welcome here, and in fact, we're going to send you back to Russia."

There's nothing so existentially terrifying for a bad guy as not having an escape plan, which is what this does.

• (1710)

Hon. Peter Kent: Very briefly, to those in Canada who would say that Canadian sanctions are not needed given the effectiveness of the U.S. prohibitions and sanctions, how would you answer?

Mr. William Browder: Well, at the moment, we just have U.S. sanctions. Ultimately, if these people want to come to Canada, they can. If they want to go to Europe, they can. The beauty of doing this in Canada is that if you look at what's going on in Europe, some European countries will say they don't want to follow America for various what I call "anti-American" reasons. The great thing is that there's anti-Americanism in the world, but I've never heard of anti-Canadianism.

Canada actually is in a very useful spot here. Russia can't cut off the gas to Canada. The type of leverage they have over the Europeans they don't have over you. You can do this in a position of moral leadership. It also negates the whole concept that this is an American initiative, an American anti-Russian initiative. No, this is an anti-torture initiative, which Canada as a leader should get involved in. I think it does help close the loopholes, wherever they may exist, so that first we have America, then we have Canada, and eventually we get Europe.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll just give everybody a sense of the discussion the committee will have at some point on whether this is a notice of motion or whether it's a motion that can be discussed here today. Until I get a clear picture from our justice folks, we'll consider it a notice of motion that will be presented to the committee at a later date. As you know, motions require 48 hours' notice.

I just want to throw that in for now, and we'll have a discussion about that later.

I may change my mind, Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: I'll save my comments for later.

The Chair: Go ahead, Peter.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'd like to thank you all for being here and for sharing with us what is really a story of bravery, of very important advocacy work.

Madam Nemtsova, I'm very sorry for your family's loss. These are difficult issues to deal with as parliamentarians, but that's our job. We're very blessed to have you here today.

Mr. Kara-Murza, I would underline that: a 5% chance. You made a very articulate presentation.

Mr. Browder, the story is fascinating. I followed it in the press and I also read a bit of the book. You're a tireless champion for human rights.

The work that all of you are doing in Mr. Magnitsky's name is critical, so critical, I think, that I want to put this question to you just as a way to get some ideas. What about generalizing what you're calling for here, having it as a general principle, as part of a broader sanctions regime that would look at travel bans, that would deal with visas, with all of the things you're calling for, but applying it generally and not to one specific state? Mr. Magnitsky's name could of course be used.

What do you think of that? It could maximize the good work that can be done here. I wonder if you think there's merit in this kind of an approach.

That's for anyone.

Mr. William Browder: Let me address that, because I've been through this in America.

The American Magnitsky Act had originally started as just an act for Sergei Magnitsky. Then various people—Boris Nemtsov, Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and various others—came forward and said that we had hit the Achilles heel of the Putin regime, so let's do it more broadly than just one case. My Senate sponsors said of course that made total sense, and broadened it to include all gross human rights abusers in Russia.

At that point, the White House didn't want to upset Russia. They said we should make it a global piece of legislation. My Senate co-sponsors said of course they would, so it became a global Magnitsky Act. It was only at the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth minute—there were a lot of arguments from supporters of some countries that didn't want this—that it became Russian again, and it became a Russian Magnitsky Act. Everybody grudgingly accepted that as opposed to the morally perfect idea of sanctioning bad guys everywhere.

There's currently a global Magnitsky Act. The Russian act passed 92 to 4 in the Senate, 89% of the House of Representatives, and became law on December 14, 2012, with the idea that we were going to then try to do a global Magnitsky act. A global Magnitsky Act was then launched in the Senate and House of Representatives. It passed unanimously in the Senate, but it is still waiting for a vote in the House of Representatives. I think it would be my wish, and the wish of the Magnitsky family and many other victims around the world, to have a piece of legislation in America that works that way.

I don't see why that shouldn't be done here. However, there are practical considerations. I know who's on the side of right and on the side of wrong as far as Russia is concerned, but I don't know when it comes to other countries. The moment you open it up into a global debate, you end up with a lot of uncertain allies and enemies.

I can't tell you what the right political strategy is. We want to make sure we get a Russian Magnitsky Act. If it can be global, that's a huge bonus, but I would hate to make perfect the enemy of good. I'd rather get something done that's not perfect than nothing done that is perfect.

• (1715)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I appreciate that. From my perspective, the story of what Mr. Magnitsky went through in his quest for justice and truth is so heart-wrenching that I raise generalizing the principle as a way of...

You know, March 23 is the pertinent date here when it comes to the Special Economic Measures Act, or SEMA. I'm only saying this for the record. I know that you know these facts very well. For me, it's simply about asking if we can have a principle enshrined in there, in the review, where we look at this and say perhaps there's a lot to be said about a general policy here, so that, as I said before, the good work that all of you have done can be maximized.

But I take your point on that. There's a review coming. As part of that, certain ideas need to be advanced.

Mr. William Browder: You wouldn't get any objection from me if you did effectively a global Magnitsky Act here in Canada. I think that would be ideal. It's not for me or any of my colleagues to advise you on how to conduct things.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I only raised it to say that, as the review proceeds, this is one of the things that I think merits strong consideration.

Those are comments. Thank you so much.

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: Can I add a couple of words on this?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Of course.

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: On your main question, I would also agree in principle. I mean, there can be no objection to making it global, because human rights, by their very nature, are universal and apply to everyone. In principle, then, I think that would be a very honourable thing to do.

We had this discussion about five years ago, when there was a move from the initial Magnitsky bill in the U.S. Congress, which focused just on Sergei's case, to the second bill, which was then adopted and became the Magnitsky Act. It had this widening clause, section 4(b) in the American law, which included other cases of gross human rights abuse.

This, I think, is an extremely important thing to do. It's important not only to bring to responsibility those who Sergei uncovered as having stolen the money from Russian taxpayers—those who then arrested, tortured, and killed him—but to also have this enshrined as a principle for all those who in the future would consider torturing, murdering, abusing human rights, violating Russia's international obligations on human rights, and engaging in corruption, and to have the principle that they will be held responsible. Even if we cannot do it, for now, in our country, because we don't have rule of law and we don't have democratic institutions, we can do this on the international level. It's important to have that open-ended clause that whoever does engage in this sort of behaviour will have to answer and will have to be held responsible for this.

The Chair: Okay, we'll go to Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, thank you for being with us. I do not see how we could have gained a deeper understanding of this situation than we have with you here.

I think I properly understood, from your presentation, the direct consequences of such a measure for the Putin administration. However, there is one aspect that you have not addressed. Does this measure have consequences for the Russian people's standard of living? If so, what are they?

•(1720)

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: The notion of targeted individual sanctions under the Magnitsky Act is really without precedent in world history. These are not sanctions against a country, against a people, or even against a government. These are sanctions against individuals who are personally guilty and responsible for human rights abuses.

Incidentally, I will say that all the Kremlin's efforts to present the Magnitsky Act as a measure imposing sanctions against Russia have not been successful, despite all the bureaucrats' and the regime's propaganda and efforts. In December 2012, just after the Magnitsky Act was passed in the United States, a poll was conducted by the Levada Center, an independent sociological research group in Russia. In general, the results are credible. People were asked whether they agreed with the principle that those who engage in corruption and who commit human rights abuses cannot travel to Western countries or use their banking systems. The survey found that 44% of Russians agreed with this principle and that only 21% did not; the rest did not respond.

Even with all the propaganda and efforts made to present the Magnitsky Act as a measure imposing sanctions against Russia, the Kremlin has not been successful. Russian citizens understand that these are sanctions against those who abuse human rights and engage in corruption with their money. The really brilliant idea behind these sanctions is that they punish those who should be held accountable for their own actions, not those who are not guilty.

I apologize for the quality of my French.

Mr. Robert Aubin: It is very good, don't worry.

I understand then that there is no direct impact on the Russian people, and even that they tend to approve of these sanctions.

I confess that I rather like the idea of extending this procedure, since we are talking about linking this act to basic human rights. I think the act could apply everywhere.

Is there any other support that you would like Canada to provide in the anti-corruption fight in Russia?

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: The most important thing is that Canada should not allow corrupt people and human rights abusers to use its financial system, coming to visit, buy homes in the country, and send their children to Canadian schools. That is really important.

Most of the reasons why Russian society is cynical about the West are artificial. They are the result of propaganda on Russian television against the West and against enemies. However, one reason for this cynicism is quite real. Many western leaders speak of human rights, democracy, the importance of legislation, and the fight against corruption, but in reality, they let corrupt people use their financial system, travel in their country, come on vacation, and buy houses. That seems hypocritical.

I think the most important thing is that western and democratic countries, which are based on principles of law, democracy, and justice, do not open up to people who engage in corruption, steal, and abuse basic human rights. This is really the main thing to do.

•(1725)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you very much.

Your testimony is as persuasive as your own story.

I have no other questions, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Borys, you're next.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Kara-Murza, you have my heartfelt gratitude. I don't know how to put it more poignantly; it's my heartfelt gratitude that you're here today as a living witness. Litvinenko, radioactive polonium; Yushchenko, dioxin; and Kara-Murza, we don't know; heavy metals, most likely. The Kremlin clearly has a track record of poisoning political opponents, both Russian and foreign.

Mr. Browder and you pointed out the difference between the Magnitsky sanctions and the typical sanctions, which are sectoral or economic. These target the jailers, the torturers, the political assassins, and the show-trial prosecutors and judges.

Clearly, with poisonings, there are highly professional scientific experts involved in carrying out these types of political assassinations. Are you aware of what agencies within Russia are involved in the development of these methods of assassination by poison? Should not the scientists and technicians involved also be covered by this Magnitsky Act?

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: Thank you very much for the question.

They certainly have had a long track record of those kinds of cases. To those that you mentioned, I'd also add Yuri Shchekochikhin. We can add Anna Politkovskaya, who, two years before she was assassinated, was also poisoned on her way to Beslan. We can add the strange case of Mr. Perepilichny, who was a whistle-blower in the Magnitsky case, and Bill can talk in more detail about this.

They certainly have had a very long track record. We know that this organization, which was called at various times different names—the NKVD, the MGB, the KGB, and now the FSB—but whose substance unfortunately has not changed because of that, has had this special lab dealing in those special types of poisons, including untraceable ones, since at least the 1930s. They certainly have a long experience in this.

I have no particular information, obviously, about who and by what means they did what they did to me. I pretty much know why, but I don't know who or how. As soon as I was able to return to Russia last year after medical rehabilitation, I submitted a request for a criminal investigation into attempted murder of the Russian investigative committee. Not surprisingly, I think, there hasn't been any movement on this.

I don't have any information other than to say that it was certainly something very sophisticated and very potent. When a healthy 33-year-old man has all of his organs fail within a few hours, I think it has to be something strong that they used. Other than that, I don't have any specific information, other than to say that those types of sophisticated poisons are usually substances that either those special services that I mentioned, or people from the special services, have access to. I think I can safely assume that this was the case with me as well.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

Ms. Nemtsova, it truly is an honour to have the late Boris Nemtsov's daughter here in front of the committee. Your father was a fearless fighter for democratic rights, for human rights, and for the dignity of the Russian people. He was incorruptible. It's why he was assassinated.

We understand that because of threat and security reasons you have left Russia. Statistics also show that in the last year there's been a tenfold increase in the number of people who have left Russia. The number was approximately 300,000. What is the state of human rights in Russia at the present time?

• (1730)

Ms. Zhanna Nemtsova: Thank you very much for the question.

I don't think that I have to further describe what the state of human rights is. If everything was good, we wouldn't be here today. After what Mr. Browder and Mr. Kara-Murza described, and after the assassination of my father, the most high-profile assassination in Russian history, we understand that it's awful, and it's getting worse as more activists are put under severe pressure and are thrown into jail. In the latest case, Dadin, who was just an activist who acted according to the constitution, which guarantees the freedom of peaceful gatherings, was sentenced to a three-year term in prison because he peacefully protested in Russia. I think it's very important that there are still people—there are very few—who resist human rights abuses.

My case is very personal. Three years ago, I couldn't have imagined that I would be a human rights activist, because I thought that my father was the one who represented my interests and my family's interests in the political sphere, but when you are personally affected, it's a very devastating experience. It's what Mr. Browder experienced with Sergei Magnitsky. I think that 10 or 12 years ago he wouldn't have imagined that he would be a human rights activist.

I don't want to speak for everybody, but for me it's a very moral choice, and I think that in what I do I am right. My father thought the same, that he was right. I believe that he was right and that I am right in what I do. I think it's a question of morality, because if you're personally affected, you just cannot close your eyes. You cannot see well if you don't do anything to find justice—to find justice for my father—so for me, I think it's a moral choice.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's the end of the first round. Now we'll go to the second round, with Mr. Saini and then Mr. Miller.

I would like to use the chair's prerogative for one minute.

There were a number of comments made in your presentation, Mr. Kara-Murza, about other prisoners and other individuals you were speaking of who are in the same position as some of the individuals who are mentioned in this motion and/or are part of your interest in having Canada pass a very specific piece of legislation or including it in our Special Economic Measures Act.

I was curious about that and wonder if there is any information you could provide the committee, because we have not had a chance to do a significant review of the American situation as it relates to the passing of its legislation and whether it has made any difference in Russia in terms of dealing with the individuals who you say should be prosecuted and/or put in a situation where we could find out more about who's doing these atrocities in Russia. Could you give us a sense of what's going on in the U.S.?

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: Sure. Thank you very much for the question.

The U.S. Magnitsky Act provides for a detailed process about establishing information about these human rights abuses, obviously prior to making decisions about sanctioning those individuals. Part of that process involves getting information from non-governmental organizations, including those that operate in Russia directly. I know that many of my colleagues in Russian civil society in the human rights movement and the NGO movement have taken part in this process and have submitted this information, detailed information, about specific individuals responsible for human rights abuses.

Actually, on his very last visit to Washington, which was in January 2014, Boris Nemtsov met several members of the U.S. Congress from both houses. He handed them a list that contained the names of 13 individuals with detailed information and relevant evidence and links to primary sources connected to human rights abuses.

I recall that this list included, for instance, Aleksandr Bastrykin, the head of the investigative committee, who once personally took a prominent independent journalist in Russia, Sergei Sokolov of the *Novaya Gazeta*, to a forest near Moscow and threatened him with murder, openly, if the newspaper continued their investigations. He told him, in a laughing manner, that he'd be the one investigating the murder, so don't worry about it, everything will be fine; nobody will ever find out, and they'll never find you.

That's what he said, and he actually admitted it. That's not just a legend. It's not something that people think; he actually admitted to this.

So he was on the list, as was Mr. Churov, who has become a symbol of election fraud in our country. He's been the chairman of the central electoral commission, and was responsible for the rigged election rounds in both 2007-08 and 2011-12. He was on the list, again with detailed, specific evidence.

This is how the U.S. process works. Unfortunately, I have to say that the implementation of the Magnitsky Act as it is done by the current U.S. administration is not, in my view, adequate to the initial goals and aims of the Magnitsky Act. This act was not intended to have a glass ceiling. It was not intended just to punish low-level abusers and violators. Of course, they also should be held responsible, there's no question about it, but it should go higher. It should include high-profile people who order these human rights abuses, who cover them up, and who use their authority to commit them. So far, frankly, among the 39 people that Bill mentioned who have been sanctioned under the Magnitsky list, there hasn't been a single high-profile senior person in the Putin regime. This is why I think the effect has been more limited than it otherwise could have been.

I'll give you a different example, not related to the Magnitsky Act, but related in the same vein of personal sanctions against people who commit these abuses. Back in 2007 you may remember there was a controversy about the relocation of a Soviet-era war memorial in Tallinn in Estonia. While this was developing, a pro-Kremlin group called Nashi—it means “ours”—set out to engage in an intimidation campaign against the then Estonian ambassador in Moscow, Marina Kaljurand. She's now the foreign minister of Estonia. They followed her everywhere. They threw stuff at her. They threw stuff at her car. They hounded her. They shouted at her press conferences and all the rest of it.

The Estonian government ruled this to be in violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. They put Vasily Yakemenko, who was at that time a minister in Mr. Putin's government and the coordinator of Nashi, on a visa ban list. Of course, Estonia being a member state of the Schengen zone of European countries, their blacklist meant a Schengen-wide blacklist.

For the nine years now that have followed, Mr. Yakemenko has been desperately trying to get off that blacklist. He still hasn't succeeded. But in all those nine years, there hasn't been a single case of an attack against foreign diplomats serving in Moscow, including even Ukrainian diplomats, even with all the stuff going on in the last two years, not a single case.

So if ever you need an example that these sanctions work, if applied effectively and at the appropriate level, I would use that example.

• (1735)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Browder, I was curious about one last point. As I understand it, Mr. Cotler did present a private member's bill on a couple of occasions to the House of Commons under the previous government. Those attempts failed, obviously, or you wouldn't be here. Was there any reason that the previous government felt strongly not to move on Mr. Cotler's legislative structure of this process? Of course, it would be interesting to know if there were some technical concerns or issues that they thought needed to be resolved before they could move on a piece of legislation like that.

I'd be interested to hear your comments on that.

Mr. William Browder: I can't speak for the previous government, since I was an outsider just trying to make the previous

government act, but as I understand it, the reason for the delay was parliamentary mechanics. His private member's bill didn't have the proper lottery number or some term that you use here. In other words, he didn't have the moment in which he could actually present it to be considered for a vote, so he chose a secondary route.

I feel a little embarrassed speaking for Irwin, who's sitting right here. He could probably explain this better than I could.

The Chair: Don't worry; we will invite him. I can guarantee that.

• (1740)

Mr. William Browder: Since he didn't have the lottery number to make his presentation formally, he chose to use the immense credibility he'd accumulated among his parliamentary colleagues on a cross-party basis to say that since he didn't have an opportunity to present his private member's bill, he would ask for their support of a specific call for the government to do this. On that basis, everybody in Parliament supported him. It was unanimous. Then the government got to work.

I don't believe there was any intention for the government not to do this. I think it was purely a matter of running out of time that this whole thing didn't become a piece of legislation. I'm sure that many technical issues had to be addressed, as there were in America. It took us a long time from start to finish to iron out all the technical issues to address the concerns. A lot of that stuff, as I understand it, was already ironed out in the previous government.

I actually met with members of the staff at Global Affairs, and they've already had a year to work on this. We're not starting from scratch here. This is not something that's unknown. I think the principle has been more or less agreed to, and the details. This is not a big stretch to go from the campaign promise to the implementation. It just requires the political will to do it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini: First of all, on behalf of all of us, I want to thank you very much for your compelling testimony. Each one of you, I think we can all collectively agree, is a profile in courage.

When a crime is committed, you have, I think, different layers of participation. At the initial layer are the people who are directly implicated, who have the maximum advantage from that crime. Then you have a second layer. They may not have that direct implication but they know of the crime. From my understanding of your testimony about the situation in Russia, a lot of these people, whether you call them whistle-blowers or just people who want to come forward, may not have the comfort, the security or safety, to come forward with the knowledge they have.

Obviously this is a very well-known case, but I'm sure crimes are being committed there every day where people have knowledge of the crime but have not been able to come forward because of fear, fear of retribution, fear of punishment. Is there some mechanism you envision, with your experience, where we can create an environment, maybe not so much domestically but maybe internationally, that would highlight these crimes? I think if they're highlighted, and if there are a lot of crimes happening that come more to the attention of the world, they might have a different response.

Mr. William Browder: Let me take a crack at that. Maybe Vladimir will back me up.

There are so many human rights abuses in Russia and they are done with such brazenness that it's not hard to prove many of these cases. I guess it's a question of picking the low-hanging fruit first. In many cases, you don't need whistle-blowers. There are people with dossiers of evidence who are showing up now in the United States, all on different cases, and trying to get people added to the sanctions list. As Vladimir said, the big frustration is that there are only 39 people on the list.

It's an evergreen concept. The law exists and will continue to exist so that more people can be added, but we're having trouble getting the political will to add significant numbers of people. There probably should be 10,000 people on this list.

The real issue, which I think Vladimir and Zhanna can speak to, is that nobody in Russia has any confidence that anybody in the west wants to add anybody to any list. I think plenty of people do show up and would like to show up with more information if they had any confidence that something would happen and that there would be consequences for these people who have committed these grave crimes.

There's nothing worse than being a victim of a crime, going to the authorities, whether they be authorities in your country or the authorities in a different country, and having the authorities ignore that crime. That's a feeling most people have with regard to the west—and when I say “the west”, it includes Canada, the United States, and Europe in general—which is that terrible and horrific things happen and everybody says, “It's not our problem.”

Effectively, with a Magnitsky act, whether it be a Russian act specifically or a global act, it would give people some hope that in Canada, the United States, and other places, people do care. My hope is that this would become eventually a sort of pedestrian thing where it doesn't even impact any kind of diplomatic relations, and you can be sanctioning human rights violators almost as a sort of process of criminal justice and can continue to carry on diplomatic relations as you choose, which is almost a separate area.

• (1745)

Ms. Zhanna Nemtsova: I would like to add that I fully agree with the statement of Mr. Browder, but I would like to give an example, which is that in Russia people do not consider themselves criminals. They are proud of it. They know that they enjoy impunity, and they openly.... For example, for Mr. Kadyrov, the ruler of Chechnya, there is both indirect evidence and direct evidence of his probable involvement with my father's assassination, because he has recently issued death threats towards other opposition leaders saying that he would punish them according to the law or without any law, and everywhere....

You don't need any whistle-blowers, because people are proud of being criminals. This behaviour is encouraged. For example, Kadyrov, that ruler of Chechnya in the Russian state, was given another chance to be re-elected as the ruler of Chechnya, and Putin said that he was a very effective ruler of Chechnya, actually after he had issued those death threats.

You have all this evidence. You just have to find a way to stop impunity for these people. On many occasions, I filed an application to question or to interrogate Kadyrov and his closest allies, but there were refusals on the part of the investigative committee. Then I challenged it in Russian court and got another refusal, so I think it's too difficult in Russia. In Russia it's very, very criminal on a very low level.

Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza: I'll add a couple of words.

I think you make a very important point about the safety of whistle-blowers. This certainly has been an issue. Again, as we know from the Perepilichny case, even abroad the whistle-blowers are apparently not safe.

I think the point made by Zhanna is the main one here, which is that we're not even at a point where we have to look for whistle-blowers to find more obscure cases, because there are blatant, blazing, in-your-face cases of gross human rights abuses committed by the highest-placed officials in the Putin regime, who openly boast about them. As I mentioned, Mr. Bastrykin openly admitted to threatening a journalist with murder. He then said to him that he was sorry, but he openly admitted doing it.

In the case of Mr. Churov, the head of the electoral commission, we actually have official documents from the Council of Europe, from the OSCE, in the reports of the monitoring missions documenting the fraud. We don't need whistle-blowers for that. It's out there. It's all public.

In this initiative that Bill mentioned a few minutes ago, we met with members of the U.S. Congress back in the spring of last year after Boris Nemtsov was murdered. We proposed introducing sanctions against state propaganda officials in Russia who were personally involved, in the months leading up to his assassination, in incitement against him by calling him a traitor, a foreign agent, and a fifth columnist, and by saying that he would have welcomed Nazi troops in Moscow if he were alive in 1941.

I'm not making this up. These are all on the record. They are public statements made by state propaganda officials month after month and day after day, which created the atmosphere that made it possible to assassinate the leader of the Russian opposition just outside the Kremlin wall. It wasn't created on its own. It was created by specific people with specific names. We know these people, without any whistle-blowers. We know them, but nobody is acting against them.

Before we get to the important point you've raised, I think we have to see some initiative on the blazingly public cases that we know of, that are well documented, and that really should be acted upon.

Ms. Zhanna Nemtsova: I can add something. We haven't mentioned the high-profile name of the prosecutor general of Russia, Yury Chaika. Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption activist, recently made a documentary on the facts of the corruption of Chaika and his family and their probable involvement in murders.

What was the result of this documentary? Four million people watched it, but no actions on the part of the government have yet been taken, so Yury Chaika has secured his position as the prosecutor general. Also, there were no lawsuits against Navalny. That means that all the facts presented in the documentary were true.

•(1750)

The Chair: I would like to take this opportunity now, because I think we've run out of runway, if we can put it in those terms, and I want to thank the witnesses very much. I don't think there is anybody here at this table who feels any less strongly than you do about the importance of dealing with these kinds of issues.

I want to thank you very much for getting us started in what we know is going to be a very major review of the legislation that now exists in Canada. I think it's well known by everyone around the table that we will be getting some sort of order from the House for this committee to review the Special Economic Measures Act. How your presentation and others will fit into that is extremely important for all of us, so I want to thank you very much.

I want to say to the committee that, as I understand it, we will send the Conservative Party motion that was put forward to our subcommittee for review. I think we are all of the same opinion that we have to find the best way forward to make sure, and we want

to look at this motion and the other motions that have been presented to this committee. We'll come back to this committee and make a decision on how we will move forward.

I want to thank all of you very much.

Dean, did you want to say a few words?

Mr. Dean Allison: Yes, just that we task this motion as quickly as possible, and that if we need to have a meeting sooner rather than later, I recommend that we do it the week we get back, on the Monday or the Tuesday.

The Chair: Yes, and that will be the first part of our agenda for sure.

Colleagues, I thank all of you for your time. We'll see you on Tuesday in a few weeks.

The meeting is adjourned.

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