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Chair: Mr. Peter Fonseca

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• (1105)
[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on February 20, 2020, today is the second meeting of the subcommittee on its study of the human rights situation of the Uighurs.

Today's witnesses are appearing by video conference and proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much as in regular committee meetings. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of "Floor", "English" or "French". As you are speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you will need to also switch the interpretation channel so it aligns with the language you are speaking. You might want to allow for a short pause when switching languages.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. Should any technical challenges arise, such as in relation to interpretation or a problem with your audio, please advise the chair immediately and the technical team will work to resolve the problem.

Before we begin, we would like to emphasize our focus on Uighurs. Several of our witnesses we've heard from are experts in human rights in general, and some will be here with an emphasis on China. There are and will be opportunities through future meetings of this committee and other government committees to address many issues in respect to China and other human rights issues. I say this because our witnesses are here to share their expertise on Uighurs, so to reiterate, the focus is on Uighurs.

I commend all our witnesses from yesterday's meeting. They were truly amazing. We had experts, we had advocates, we had academics. We had personal stories of courage and bravery. We thank them for coming forward.

I now welcome today's witnesses. For this panel, we have from the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign, the head, William Browder; as an individual, Olga Alexeeva, sinologist and professor of contemporary Chinese history, from the Université du Québec at Montreal; Azeezah Kanji, legal academic and journalist; and Errol

Mendes, professor of law and president of the International Commission of Jurists Canada.

Clerk, I believe that is the order in which we will be going.

Mr. Browder, you will start off. You will have six minutes to address us with your opening statement and then we'll move to members' questions.

You may begin.

Mr. William Browder (Head, Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign): Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you today on the shocking persecution of the Uighur minority in China.

I come to this from a slightly different angle than other people on the panel and other people who have testified. Some of you may know me. For many years I've been coming to Ottawa to advocate to pass the Magnitsky act in Canada. My background is that I was in Russia for many years. Sergei Magnitsky was my lawyer. He uncovered a massive case of corruption, exposed it, and was, in retaliation, arrested, tortured and killed. I came up with this idea of the Magnitsky act, which would freeze the assets and ban the visas.

I came first to the United States, and they passed the Magnitsky act in 2012. I then came to Canada. Canada passed the Magnitsky act in 2017. Now, in total, there are seven countries with Magnitsky acts.

The Magnitsky act is quite a powerful tool in dealing with human rights abuse. It used to be that 40 years ago people like the Khmer Rouge didn't go on vacation to Saint-Tropez, but now you have people from all these different countries who commit human rights abuses travelling to foreign countries, buying property, doing all sorts of things. It becomes a way of creating consequences in a situation where the world didn't have consequences before.

As a result of this, I have been approached in numerous countries by numerous people about numerous issues. About two and a half years ago, I was in Washington, D.C., working on implementing getting more people sanctioned under the Magnitsky act. I was asked by a U.S. official who was involved in the Uighur situation if I could spend half an hour meeting with a member of the Uighur community who this person thought I should meet. I agreed to the meeting and ended up meeting a woman named Gulchehra Hoja.

Gulchehra is a Uighur. She lives in Washington, D.C., and she works for an organization called Radio Free Asia, which is a U.S.-funded media organization that reports on things going on in Asia without any interference from the Chinese government. She works on the Uighur language service. Gulchehra sat down with me and she told me her story. It was quite remarkable. She was the first person to be able to interview somebody coming out of the Uighur concentration camps. She interviewed a woman who had come out of a camp and told the story of what had happened. In retaliation for telling that story, 25 members of her family were arrested in China and put into these concentration camps.

Hearing that story, I didn't know anything about these concentration camps before, and so I started to work with her to hear what was going on and get more information. As I'm sure many members of the panel will present today, I learned about the forced sterilization of women. I learned about the way in which literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were being arrested. I learned about the forced separation of children from their families. It's become obvious to me that this is probably the most significant human rights issue that we currently face in the world.

In addition to my personal contact with Gulchehra, I'm a descendant of a Holocaust refugee. My mother had to flee Vienna during the Holocaust. To see that we have a genocide that is effectively taking place right before our eyes when we all said, "never again", I feel compelled to do what I can for the Uighur people, and for Gulchehra and other victims.

• (1110)

The one thing we can do again, or we can do in this situation, is apply Magnitsky sanctions on the officials in China who are perpetrating this abuse. This is exactly why the Magnitsky act was created. The United States has imposed sanctions using the Magnitsky act on four Chinese officials, including a member of the politburo, and I'm scratching my head and wondering why Canada, which has the Magnitsky act specifically for this purpose, doesn't apply those sanctions right now.

I'm here today to strongly advocate for Canada to join the United States in sanctioning the Chinese officials responsible for this and hopefully expand that sanctions list so that many more people in China who are perpetrating this genocide are held responsible.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Browder.

Now we're going to move to Olga Alexeeva for six minutes for her opening statement.

Olga.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva (Sinologist and Professor of Contemporary Chinese History, Université du Québec à Montreal, As an Individual): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about the political context surrounding the repression of Uighurs in China.

As you know, since 2017, hundreds of thousands of Uighurs have been detained in so-called re-education centres, which the

Chinese authorities claim is intended to combat Muslim extremism. In fact, the opening of these camps is only the latest in a very long series of repressive measures adopted by the Chinese government against Uighurs.

The autonomous region of Xinjiang, where the majority of Uighurs live, was only integrated into the Chinese space in the 19th century. Since that time, the Uighurs have been fighting against Chinese assimilation practises, and this struggle is today led by multiple independence movements, violent or not, based on various ideologies, notably "Pan-Turkism," the movement for democracy and radical Islamism. They all share the same objective: to establish an independent Uighur state in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang has therefore always been a control challenge for Beijing, but since the 1990s, the Uighurs' struggle for independence has intensified. Many factors explain these developments. As a historian, I could go on for hours explaining them to you, but I think the main reason is that the Uighurs now feel marginalized on their own territory. More and more Chinese migrants are now coming to Xinjiang. They are monopolizing arable land and water resources and taking advantage of government aid to set up businesses, while the Uighurs are getting poorer.

The Chinese also predominate in local government. The feeling of being dominated by China for the benefit of the Chinese and at their expense has generated, as you can imagine, a very deep sense of unease among the Uighurs. This frustration has quickly turned into protest, which is normal, and it takes different forms in Xinjiang, from bombings and spontaneous riots to student demonstrations and peaceful activism by Uighur activists who have fled abroad.

Nevertheless, Beijing qualifies all these actions as terrorist acts inspired by the international Islamist movement. According to Beijing, the existence of some Uighur Jihadist groupings with links to al-Qaeda thus legitimizes the intensification of repression in Xinjiang. This hardening is reflected in thousands of arrests and the trivialization of torture and ill-treatment of Uighur prisoners.

In response, as you may know, a new wave of deadly attacks occurred in China in 2013 and 2014. These attacks, in particular the attack on Tiananmen Square in Beijing, have had a thunderbolt effect among the Chinese leadership, who now see the Uighur problem as a threat to national stability. In their view, this justifies the authoritarian takeover of the entire Uighur population and no longer just militants, sympathizers or people whom they describe as terrorists.

Starting in 2014, the number of Chinese law enforcement personnel patrolling Xinjiang territory has been increased. There are now more than 100,000 Chinese law enforcement personnel. Cameras with facial and voice recognition tools have been installed throughout the country to track people and vehicles everywhere, including in rural areas. Biometric data collection, including DNA, has also been initiated for the entire Uighur population. It is understood that these surveillance measures are extremely intrusive. The problem is that they are also accompanied by arbitrary arrests, house searches, confiscation of passports and bans on certain religious practices. At the same time, more than 20 internment camps have also been opened throughout the Xinjiang region. The criteria for sending people to these camps are arbitrary and unclear.

• (1115)

It is enough to possess an unapproved edition of the Koran, to abstain from drinking alcohol, to do Ramadan or to travel too often to Turkey or Egypt to find oneself in one of these camps for an indefinite period of time. Indeed, the legal procedures are also very opaque.

The Uighurs are now subjected to repressive practices. They have been victimized for decades, but the scale of the current repression is unprecedented. More than 1 million Uighurs, or 10% of the population, are now being held in camps in Xinjiang. In Beijing's view, this strategic region, which is rich in natural resources, would be an inalienable part of the country's territory. It is inconceivable for Beijing to renounce it or to grant its people any kind of autonomy. It must also be said that the instability in Xinjiang poses risks to the Chinese project. As is well known, the New Silk Road is very dear to Xi Jinping's heart.

This very serious, very tense and very particular political context places Uighurs in an impasse. It feeds the breeding ground for resentment and hatred towards the authorities in Beijing and the Chinese in general. In my opinion, the harshness of the repression could only push young activists, frustrated by this incredible injustice, to opt for a more violent approach. Therefore, one can only imagine that, in the long term, this policy may lead to conflict.

• (1120)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Alexeeva. You will have an opportunity to elaborate during the question period.

We'll now move to Errol Mendes for six minutes.

Mr. Errol P. Mendes (Professor of Law and President, International Commission of Jurists Canada): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you for the invitation.

We are witnessing in Xinjiang, China, what we had hoped would never happen again after the Second World War. I'm talking about the detention of over a million Uighurs. This is an ethnic and religious group on whom we are witnessing enforced birth control efforts by the Chinese government to reduce the numbers of this group. While the Chinese claim that these are vocational and training camps, there are credible reports that these camps include en-

forced propaganda sessions, forced labour and physical abuse, and some are alleging even deaths.

There is no one who is excluded. I want to give you an example of a leading Muslim female professor who I had gotten to know during my many years of doing research in China. Gulazat Tursun is a professor of law and was a supervisor of Ph.D. students at Sichuan University. She was one of the well-known international academics focusing on human rights. She was a visitor at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at Harvard University and Denmark's Danish Institute for Human Rights. Despite these credentials, she was basically detained in one of those camps, and to this day we are not certain whether she has been released or not.

Others have had an even worse fate. One academic may be facing the ultimate fate. Dr. Tashpolat Tiyyip, a renowned scholar of geography and a former president of Xinjiang University, was suspected of being at risk of execution as he faced the end of a two-year reprieve of his death sentence, according to the Scholars at Risk Network in September of 2019. We haven't heard about his fate either.

I agree with my friend, former justice minister Irwin Cotler, that we should join the U.S. and other countries who have imposed targeted sanctions against the key figures in Xinjiang who are the major planners for the mass detention. I have suggested that the Magnitsky sanctions should target the architects of the detention, and I give names. I suggest the governor of Xinjiang, Shohrat Zakir and the region's party chief, Chen Quanguo, who is a member of the politburo of the party at the highest ranks of the Chinese government.

There are others, but these two, I think, are the chief planners of the detention. Both have asserted that these allegations of what amount to serious international crimes, which I would like to talk about, against the Uighurs are fabricated lies and absurd. In fact, Zakir goes even further by describing the camps as boarding schools where the rights of the students are protected.

In 2017, Parliament passed the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, which implements the Magnitsky sanctions and which targets specific officials in terms of freezes and travel bans and also freezes their assets. Similar laws, as my friend Bill Browder has said, have been adopted by the U.S and other European countries. Now the European Union, thanks to his championship, has also considered expanding the Magnitsky sanctions across the European Union.

As is known, Bill was one of the major champions for this provision because his own lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, was murdered by Russian officials. I had the privilege of assisting in a minor way in having Bill come up to Canada and promote the adoption of the Magnitsky law here in Canada.

I would like to briefly address the views of another legal colleague who is also the next ambassador to the United Nations, Bob Rae. In an interview with the Globe and Mail, he stated that the Canadian government must consider the consequences of imposing sanctions on senior government officials for human rights violations against minority groups.

While I agree with him that a government can never afford to engage in non-consequential thinking and non-consequential acting, he seemed to imply that could include any actions involving our two Canadians, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, and further trade actions on our agricultural and lumber products. However, Canada cannot bend its foundational commitments as a society to the rule of law. That is the antithesis of what's happening in Xinjiang. We cannot abandon our often-stated commitments to the promotion and protection of universal human rights embodied in our promise of “never again”. We cannot be seen to be bystanders to the latest, yet again, serious international crimes that come within the definition of crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and genocide.

We cannot stay silent or inactive in the face of these atrocities or we forfeit our right to be regarded as champions of equal human dignity and the rights of all peoples on the world stage. History has shown that silence is the complicit partner to genocide.

• (1125)

Canada cannot be silent or inactive against what I consider to be mounting crimes against humanity, including genocidal acts against the Uighurs. I consider that the actions of the Chinese government amount to crimes against humanity and genocidal acts, especially as they continue in terms of forced birth control acts against the Uighurs.

Now, the officials who I suggest should be targets for these Magnitsky sanctions may not have any frozen assets here in Canada, or may not even want to travel here in Canada, but the signal we send with the targeted sanctions, to not just China but the entire world, is that we are acting on behalf of humanity. We hope our traditional allies will follow suit and perhaps even consider joining us.

Regarding the threat of possible punishing consequences from China, given that we are already facing such actions with the detention of two Canadians as a consequence of the Meng Wanzhou extradition proceedings, I suggest that we must develop a longer-term strategy and policy on China that addresses both the hostage diplomacy actions and some of the other consequences we are facing in terms of trade sanctions, etc., which I think violate world trade rules. I think Canada and its government must develop a longer-term strategy with our traditional democratic allies and hopefully a future U.S. administration that puts in place economic, social and multilateral deterrents to not only the use of hostage diplomacy but also the ability of China to target democratic countries that are bound by their values, principles and constitutions to adhere to the rule of law.

This could include common approaches to make Chinese global companies subject to national security, human rights and anti-corruption scrutiny, and penalize them for complicity in their state's actions amounting to the most serious international crimes. Given the reports that are coming out of Xinjiang, I think some of the brands that are being made by forced labour and finding their way up to the U.S. and Canada should be one of the key actions that this committee, and in fact the larger committee, should be looking at to deal with those forced labour products. In fact, under the recent CUSMA, the trade agreement with the U.S. and Mexico, there is a prohibition.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement, Mr. Mendes.

Ms. Kanji, you have six minutes for your opening statement.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji (Legal Academic and Journalist, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

Official documents prescribing mass forced sterilization and mass surveillance; satellite imagery documenting the destruction of ancient cultural sites and the proliferation of concentration camps; drone footage showing men, heads shorn, shackled and blindfolded, being herded onto trains—these are just some of the glimpses we've had of China's practices in the Uighur homeland of East Turkestan, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, despite the cone of secrecy China has placed around it. We don't even know for sure exactly how many hundreds of thousands—millions—of Uighurs have been incarcerated in what is suspected to be the largest regime of minority internment since the Nazi Holocaust.

China's infamous network of concentration camps is just one node of a far more extensive project. It's extensive spatially, with the intensive surveillance state penetrating into Uighur villages, homes, bedrooms, cellphones and even DNA through mass biometric collection, even reaching abroad to target Uighurs living in Canada and elsewhere. It's also extensive temporally, with this just the latest stage in what academics have analyzed as China's decades-long, if not centuries-long, project of settler colonization and deliberate demographic change in the resource rich territory China refers to as Xinjiang, meaning literally “new frontier”.

• (1130)

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Kanji. I'm wondering if you could slow down a little bit for our interpreters and move your microphone away from your mouth a little bit. It's popping a little.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: Is this okay now?

The Chair: They say yes.

As well, just slow down a little bit.

Thank you. We'll add time to your statement.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: The concentration camps are just one note in a project that is both more spatially and temporally extensive, temporally with just the latest stage in what academics have analyzed as China's decades-long, if not centuries-long, project of settler colonization and deliberate demographic change in the resource rich territory China refers to as Xinjiang, literally meaning “new frontier”.

The renowned scholar of colonialism, Patrick Wolfe, famously said, “The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism.” In the case of China’s policies against the Uighurs, this question of genocide is not just abstract or metaphorical but imminent and literal.

In the UN genocide convention, as well as in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, genocide is defined as any one of the five following acts: one, killing; two, causing serious bodily or mental harm; three, infliction of conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction; four, imposition of measures intended to prevent births; or, five, forcible transfer of children. Any one of these listed acts, when conducted with an intention to destroy a people as a people, “in whole or in part”, qualifies as genocide when committed with the requisite genocidal intent.

In the case of the Uighurs, however, there is evidence of all five categories of genocidal acts having been committed, with reports of deaths in concentration camps; tortures, such as electrocution and waterboarding; forced starvation and exposure to diseases, including the coronavirus, in concentration and forced labour camps; a sterilization campaign, in which 80% of new intrauterine birth control devices in China were installed in Xinjiang, which constitutes less than 2% of the Chinese population; and, the separation of almost half a million children from their families and communities.

As for the question of intent, when officials describe Islam as an “ideological virus”, an “incurable malignant tumour”, and a “weed” infecting the “crops”, efforts at eradication are the logical extension.

Testifying to the seriousness of the crime, the genocide convention includes not simply an obligation to punish genocide after the fact, but an obligation on all states to prevent genocide. According to the International Court of Justice “a State’s obligation to prevent [genocide], and the corresponding duty to act, arise at the instant that the State learns of...the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed.” That threshold of serious risk has surely long been passed.

In 2014, the UN office on genocide prevention released a framework for identifying warning signs of genocide and other atrocity crimes. Virtually all of those signs are present in Xinjiang.

Having also worked on advocacy regarding the Rohingya genocide, which is now before both the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, I saw how long states avoided recognizing that situation as genocidal or proto-genocidal in order to avoid triggering their duty to prevent, as states previously refused to recognize the Rwanda genocide even as it was unfolding in the sight of the eyes of the entire world in 1994.

Even in the face of compelling evidence, the capacity for denialism is great, as are the shame, repentance and horror in hindsight when “never again” is permitted to occur again and again.

Thank you.

● (1135)

The Chair: Thank you for your remarks, and thank you for accommodating and for your patience with the interpretation and the mike.

Now we’re going to open it up to questions. Each member will have seven minutes during this round.

We’ll start with Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Browder, I want to thank you very much for all your great work. You’ve appeared before this committee on a number of occasions. You are the great example of a businessperson with a conscience, pursuing legal recourse for a friend, a lawyer from your firm who was tortured and murdered, as you said. I want to express my gratitude for all the work you did to ensure that countries like ours have a Magnitsky act, not only in a memorial to Sergei but also to make sure we can correct any other human rights violations.

Mr. Mendes, Ms. Kanji has just laid out the case very articulately for the threshold that’s been met in regard to genocide. Obviously, our committee will be making a statement after all this testimony, and a report. In your opinion, with your jurisprudence experience, do the actions of the Chinese Communist Party meet the threshold of genocide?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: In my view, they do.

As Ms. Kanji rightly stated, one of the biggest challenges, if this were to go to court, would be on what’s called the specific intent—the intent, either in whole or in part, to eliminate a group. In my view, that’s where China will try to make its defence: “Well, prove it.” Ms. Kanji quite rightly came up with certain types of evidentiary evidence that would be required to prove that intent.

The big problem I foresee, however, in terms of taking it to a court, is that China has not become a party to the International Criminal Court, and if we were to take it to the International Court of Justice, again, China would probably deny it has jurisdiction.

This is why I think it is very critical for Canada, first of all, to show its resolve by having the Magnitsky sanctions apply, but second, to work with allies, especially if we can have a future U.S. administration that is willing to work with all the democratic countries, to put together a democratic strategy to put more and more pressure, including private sector pressure, on China to stop its actions.

It’s going to take a long time. It’s going to be very complex, but we have to start, and start now.

● (1140)

Mr. David Sweet: I want to ask you about the corollary of what you said. When no action is taken, when there’s silence, how is that interpreted by regimes like the Chinese Communist Party?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: I think Bill will remember this. One of the things history has asked us to keep in mind is that before Hitler decided to start the “final solution”, he kept saying, “After all, who remembers the Armenian genocide?” That was one of the reasons why he felt that if no one paid attention to the Armenian genocide, why not start another one?

This is why I think it is absolutely critical for us to show our conviction that we promised in that “never again” promise we made. That’s one thing.

However, because I’m a realist, and knowing how powerful China is, we absolutely need our allies. We need the United States to work with all the democratic countries to confront this potential challenge, which is as great as anything we’ve faced in the 1930s, to come to grips with it. If we don’t, I think we may have even bigger disasters on our doorstep shortly.

Mr. David Sweet: This is a broad question, I know, but I want to pose it to you because of the nature of your testimony. Canada led a coalition of countries to put pressure on the South African regime to end apartheid. Do you feel that Canada could take that leadership role, with the right leadership, and bring countries together—Australia, New Zealand—and accomplish similar results with China in the long term?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: Absolutely, and I think we could start with the United States. Vice-President Biden has said, as one of his promises, that after he gets elected, and hopefully he will, he is going to establish a democratic summit of all the democratic countries in the world to address some of these issues. I think Canada should be working right now with the potential next President of the United States to see how we can put together that strategy, because it will involve all the democratic countries in the world to take on this challenge front and centre. It requires very careful planning. It requires a lot of attention to how we deal with it.

Yes, there will be consequences. We’re already facing that with the two Michaels. We’re already facing that with the agricultural committees, and we may be facing more if we do the Magnitsky sanctions.

Where I part company with my friend Bob Rae is that we can’t just focus on that. We have to look at what is going to happen if we ignore that, and what else may happen. There are potential world-shaking events that could happen. I can just refer you to one. After Hong Kong, what’s next? Could it be Taiwan?

I think right now there should be a stronger world strategy of democratic countries to figure out how to deal with this growing threat to the entire world.

Mr. David Sweet: I’m not certain whether it would be your expertise or Mr. Browder’s, so whoever wants to chime in.... We have quite a sophisticated organization called FINTRAC. Over a trillion dollars left China in 2016 and, of course, it’s laundered here in Canada. Do you think we have enough expertise to locate the money of these CCP members and fulfill the role and accomplish what is needed through the Magnitsky Act?

Mr. William Browder: Can I respond to that?

I have some experience with Canadian law enforcement in relation to money laundering investigations. In the Magnitsky case, we

identified millions of dollars—from the crime that Sergei Magnitsky exposed and was killed over—coming to Canada. We filed a criminal complaint with the RCMP about five years ago, and it was quite compelling evidence. It was clear where the money went. We found real estate that was purchased with that money. The RCMP initially opened an investigation but never seized any of the property, and then quietly closed the investigation.

I would argue that this is probably one of the most well-packaged—

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. William Browder: —formal complaints they could have ever received.

The Chair: I’m sure you’ll have an opportunity later.

We’re moving on to Mr. Zuberi for seven minutes.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I want to thank all the experts for testifying and informing us at this committee with your testimony.

I’d like to put forth the first question to Mr. Mendes around the Magnitsky sanctions. You mentioned two names, but I’d like to get your opinion. On July 9, 2020, the U.S. Department of Treasury actually implemented these very sanctions on a number of individuals and one entity. I wanted your opinion on that. There’s the Communist Party secretary of the Uighur autonomous region, Chen Quanguo. Another gentleman is Zhu Hailun, a former deputy secretary of the Uighur autonomous region. There’s also Wang Mingshan, the XPSB, and another individual.

Mr. Mendes, what is your opinion on this, in terms of going that far? You only mentioned two initially.

I don’t know if Mr. Browder would also like to contribute to that.

• (1145)

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: If all the individuals you mentioned are involved in the detention, absolutely.

I mentioned these two in particular because the targeting of sanctions against these two would reach up to the highest level, especially if we target Chen Quanguo, because he is a member of the politburo of the party. In other words, he works with President Xi Jinping. It would send a message directly to Xi Jinping if we were to focus on that particular individual.

As I said, and I think we have to recognize this, it could trigger consequences, but I think we absolutely have to stand up, even if that happens. That’s the reason why I focus on these two. The second one is the governor of Xinjiang, Shohrat Zakir. Again, he’s not as high as Chen Quanguo. That’s the reason why I focused on those two.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Okay. I have a follow-up to that. The Chinese ambassador to Canada said on December 5, 2019, that if Canada were to adopt any form of sanctions of the like that we're talking about, then there would be "very firm countermeasures". How should legislators respond to this statement by the Chinese ambassador, that there would be very firm countermeasures if we did implement that? How do you respond to that?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: Well, I think that's what was in mind when Bob Rae made his comments, and I think the same thing happened with the U.K. when it basically said it would not extend Huawei to the 5G networks.

It's time the democratic countries...and this is where I'm pleading for us to start our alliance with all the democratic countries. We cannot take that type of blackmail and just cry uncle. One of the things we have to figure out is, if they do that, what are the consequences directed back at them?

One of the things we should be examining is that the thing that China treasures more than anything else is the ability of their economic sphere to carry on growing, and they rely very much on that, on co-operation with the rest of the world in terms of trade and in terms of investments. We should be starting to think about how we put the private sector and the economic and business connections together to make sure that there will be consequences back at them if they continue with this type of blackmail.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: What I hear from you very clearly is for a multilateral approach in response to that statement that was made by the Chinese ambassador, but also I hear you saying that we should use the levers over which we have control here locally, which include economic control.

We know that an Australian institute put forth 80-odd companies that are named, including Nike, Adidas and others, and those supply chains are in question. We heard about hair supplies. We heard about cotton, 84% of which is produced in the Uighur autonomous region, east Turkestan, Xinjiang. Can you elaborate a bit more?

We also heard about the security apparatus, how our technology actually could be supporting the security apparatus and monitoring within these concentration camps.

Can you speak to those two points: the supply chains and the security apparatus?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: Absolutely. Now, in some respect, there's already an alliance there. Because of the recent trade agreement, the Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement, since July 1 we already have now a prohibition against the importation of goods made with forced labour, either in whole or in part. Right there is something on which we should start working with the United States, and hopefully with other allies, on how we can focus on those companies that are using the forced labour in Xinjiang. That's one that we should start almost immediately.

Second, in terms of the security equipment and so on, one of the things I'm hoping we will consider is that we already have an alliance in terms of national security with the Five Eyes, dealing with national security more broadly. It's time for us to start thinking about how we expand that, dealing with national security on a broader front, including how to protect our values on the rule of

law, on human rights and so on. In other words, we'd have an expanded Five Eyes and maybe include members of the European Union and other democratic countries with whom we can work together on how to stop this type of thing where China uses its acts of serious international crimes to promote its economic strategy, because ultimately, in the long run, that's what China cares most about.

• (1150)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

I'd like to get one quick question in about the responsibility to protect. In the less than one minute we have, can you comment on that, the responsibility to protect and Canada's obligation?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: Absolutely. We were one of the architects of the responsibility to protect. In fact, in 2005, our ambassador actually managed to steer that whole thing through the United Nations to get the consent of the heads of state at the United Nations.

What I would say is that the responsibility to protect doesn't just mean sending in armed forces. One of the critical functions of the responsibility to protect is to prevent these types of actions, so how do we prevent it? That's exactly what we're talking about, in terms of Magnitsky sanctions, in terms of working with our allies to focus on what could penalize China to stop them from doing this thing. In other words, we should focus on the preventive actions, which actually goes toward what Ms. Kanji was talking about, the duty to prevent genocide.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mendes.

We'll now move on to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to acknowledge the immense relevance and competence of our witnesses today and those we heard yesterday. I thank them all very much.

My first question is for Ms. Alexeeva.

During your testimony, I understand you made a connection between the New Silk Road project and the current situation in Xinjiang province. I think that's quite interesting. Could you elaborate on that?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: The New Silk Road is a project dear to Xi Jinping. In fact, you could say it's his biggest project. It is directly related to the implementation of this scheme, since this road will be part of the main land routes through Xinjiang. Even today, several gas and oil pipelines from Central Asia pass through Xinjiang, and soon there will be some from Russia as well.

What worries Beijing today, therefore, is that the region is unstable and that this project may be compromised. All kinds of unrest may call into question the reliability of this project and the delivery of gas and oil to China, but also the development of gas and oil resources in Xinjiang itself. The coordination centre for the New Silk Road project should be located in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. It is, therefore, a sort of showcase for the road project to the countries of Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. So, if everything goes wrong in this region, it cannot be a showcase for the project.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Officially, Xinjiang is an autonomous region, but are we talking about true autonomy?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: It is an officially autonomous region, but there is no real autonomy. Yes, there is a regional government, but in fact, a lot of power belongs to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which has 2.5 million demobilized Chinese soldiers. It is run directly by the Chinese State Council that controls one third of the arable land in Xinjiang and one quarter of industrial production. It is like a mini government within the government that is an instrument of policing, surveillance and economic management.

This autonomy is written on paper, which allows China to say that it does not oppress minorities and that they are autonomous, but in reality, all the key positions in the regional administration are held by the Chinese. Uighur executives are junior positions, and if Uighurs want to have a career in the civil service, they must have a perfect command of Mandarin, be members of the Communist Party and openly renounce the Muslim faith and its rites. This is very peculiar. Despite the name, it is not an autonomous region at all, and it can never be.

• (1155)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yesterday, and again today, several witnesses told us about assimilation practises that the Chinese authorities are applying in Xinjiang.

Could you tell us more about that?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: There's a lot of them. For example, since the 1960s, the Uighurs have been forced to raise pigs. They are Muslims, but since they are citizens of China, it is said that this should not be a problem for them. When I went to Urumqi, in all the restaurants, there was pork on the menu.

As far as language is concerned, it's the same. Yes, there are schools where you can be taught in Uighur. The problem is that, if you want to go to university afterwards, you have to do it in Chinese. If you want to have a career, whether as a university professor, civil servant or entrepreneur, you have to speak Chinese. For the Chinese authorities, therefore, integration comes through language and culture. Thus, Uighurs who want to succeed cannot do so in their mother tongue and Uighur culture, but only in Chinese. In other words, they have to accept the dominant culture.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: All right. Thank you, Ms. Alexeeva.

Mr. Browder, could you tell us how many Chinese citizens with assets in Canada could be affected by the Magnitsky sanctions?

[English]

Mr. William Browder: First of all, I should say that the Magnitsky act is not dependent on having assets in Canada. The purpose of sanctioning somebody under the Magnitsky act is to name and shame those individuals. If they have assets in Canada, that's a plus. If we look at the more than 200 people who have been sanctioned in the U.S. under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, we see that very few of them have assets in the United States. But the moment a person gets added to the sanctions list, that person basically becomes a pariah in the world of banking and international finance and no longer can open bank accounts anywhere.

I would argue, first of all, on a previous question of how many Chinese officials should be sanctioned, a lot more than the four who have been sanctioned by the United States. Just so it's clear, there are 52 people on the U.S. Magnitsky list, and this is just one case. We're talking about a genocide affecting a million Uighurs. That doesn't happen unless there's a massive organization involved. I think there should be a massive sanctions list for Chinese officials so the names are known and these people are named and shamed. Others who are involved may then start to worry that they're going to be named and shamed and their lives will be cut off from the international world of finance.

The Chair: Now we'll move to Ms. McPherson for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for participating today. Yesterday, of course, we heard from witnesses. It was very hard to hear the testimony of many of them, and it was very moving. I like that today we are doing a lot of discussion about some of the propositions of what we can do moving forward.

I'm going to start by playing a little bit of a devil's advocate role, not necessarily because I don't agree with the Magnitsky act and calling out individuals, but just to clarify the impacts.

Mr. Browder, I'll pose this to you, and then perhaps to Mr. Mendes afterwards.

We know the Magnitsky act addresses individuals, and it does not in fact impact the underlying system. How can we enact widespread, systematic changes in China, not just on the Uighur issue, but in terms of Hong Kong, in terms of the Falun Gong, by targeting individuals one at a time? That's one question. The other one is this: When targeting individuals, is it possible that by increasing and creating this confrontation we will limit our opportunities to use diplomacy and persuasion?

Perhaps you could both comment on that. I think I know what you're going to say, but I'd like to hear your words, please.

• (1200)

Mr. William Browder: The beauty of the Magnitsky act is that it doesn't sanction the country. Why is that beautiful? A lot of people in China are victims of the regime as well, so you end up in a situation where instead of sanctioning the perpetrators, you're sanctioning the victims. I don't think Canada has a beef with the Chinese people; Canada and the world have a beef with the organizers of this genocide, which is the Chinese government.

Now, the other elegance of the Magnitsky act is that if anyone were to suggest right now that the world should cut off business relations and diplomatic relations with China over this issue, everyone would say, "Well, that's totally unrealistic. That's never going to happen." China is too important a business player, too important a financial player, and too important a diplomatic player. What's so elegant about the Magnitsky act is that it allows the Canadian government, the U.S. government, the British government and other governments to create real punishments for people who are doing real abuses, and at the same time being realistic that they're not just going to cut off all trade and diplomatic relations with China. This is what I would describe as a powerful intermediate step. It doesn't in any way come to the level of genocide.

By the way, I should point out that you don't have to prove genocide to do Magnitsky. That's not necessary. You can do Magnitsky because of human rights abuses. Human rights abuses are clearly defined, whether genocide is defined or not, which I think it is. You have a situation where the people who are doing this have already met the threshold. You can do this; it's politically possible, and you don't have to do it alone. You can do it with the British, and you can do it with the United States. You can do it as a way of making clear that this is not acceptable and the situation will be escalated going forward.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Mr. Mendes, do you have anything to add to that?

The Chair: We have lost Mr. Mendes at the moment.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Okay. When he comes back, I have another question for him. Hopefully I'll get another opportunity for it.

Dr. Alexeeva, you spoke a little bit about the radicalization of the Uighur activists in Xinjiang. Could you speak a little further about that, please?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: Yes, of course.

It is true that some of the Uighur fighters who are leading the fight against the repressive measures of the Chinese government are members of Islamic terrorist organizations. Some of these organizations are recognized as such, including by the Canadian government. I am talking about the Islamist Party of Turkestan, but there are others.

The problem is that China represents them all as fighters in this international jihadist movement. The truth is that when we look at the data, for example, the number of Uighur fighters in Guantanamo Bay or the number of Uighur fighters arrested after the dis-

mantling of Daesh, we realize that there are tens of them, not hundreds as the Chinese government claims.

Yes, some young people are becoming more radical, which is not surprising since they have no other forums or ways of expressing themselves. They have no voice or margin for action, and this has created a favourable environment for recruitment, including by Koranic schools and international jihadist movements. However, I repeat that they are small groups, very small groups. It cannot be said that, even among the various more or less radical Uighur organizations, they are all of Islamic terrorist inspiration. Yes, there are a few, but they are a minority.

• (1205)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Mendes is back.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Very quickly, I'll ask Ms. Kanji and Ms. Alexeeva.... We know of course that the Chinese government has an anti-Muslim or Islamophobic sentiment. Do you feel that an anti-Islam sentiment has made it much more difficult for other countries to intervene in this particular instance?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: Yes, certainly. China has been using the argument that countries like the United States are extremely hypocritical in commenting on China's Islamophobic policies, given policies such as the Muslim ban. Even beyond the question of hypocrisy, we know that war on terror practices—for example, the representation of growing a beard or wearing a veil as signs of extremism or radicalization, originally promulgated in counter-radicalization programs by such countries as the United States—have served to legitimize China's viralization and extreme extrapolation of this idea to now ban growing beards or wearing hijabs in instruments such as the extremism regulations.

It's vital, then, that we also address the Islamophobia very much present in war on terror practices here, but that is not to excuse what China's genocidal policies are.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kanji.

We're going to move into our second round of questions. We'll move to Ms. Khalid for five minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their very compelling testimony.

I want to pick up on some of the discussions we've had today as well as yesterday. Ms. Kanji, I want to pick up on some of the things you've said with respect to what is happening in China currently. What is the reaction of the other minorities in China or the mainstream Chinese population to what is happening in the Xinjiang province?

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: There are certainly strong alliances to be drawn between the different experiences of minoritized communities that have been subjugated and suppressed by the Chinese regime. For example, when it comes to Tibet, the Communist Party official responsible for implementing the extremely repressive police state in Xinjiang had previously tested out those measures in the extreme repression of Tibet, which incidentally is also referred to as an autonomous region, and yet we see the irony that it is precisely these regions that are labelled autonomous that have the very possibility of any kind of autonomy and exercise of freedom stripped away from them.

When we look at the situation in Xinjiang, I think we also have to appreciate that it is not only Muslims and Uighurs who are being targeted in this way; rather, they are at the front lines and the sharpest edge of a far broader project of repression. We know that many of these surveillance techniques that were pioneered in Xinjiang are now being exported to other areas of China as well, including in response to the coronavirus pandemic. There are certainly many alliances and solidarities to be drawn between the experiences of different minoritized and repressed groups in China with the plight of the Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Is Mr. Mendes back on? He is.

This is for Mr. Mendes and perhaps Mr. Browder as well. We've spoken a lot over the past couple of days about the necessity to stop forced labour, especially in a country like Canada. Now Canada has set up a Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise, which is work that this committee has really focused on in the past number of years. I wonder in what way we could use this ombudsperson to have stronger policies with respect to forced labour coming out of human rights abuses like that in China.

• (1210)

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: I can address that first.

On the ombudsman, as you know, there's been a controversy about whether or not there are sufficient tools to be able to carry out what some of the NGOs and others wanted it to do. I don't think it's the right mechanism. I think what is the right mechanism is a law that just came into force on July 1, 2020 under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, which now says that importation of forced labour products, either in whole or in part, should be prohibited.

How do we do that? There was a bill, Bill S-211, that was being forwarded by John McKay, one of your colleagues, and a senator, which would require mandatory reporting on whether or not companies have taken all due diligence in making sure that they don't bring in products based on modern slavery or forced labour. Some have said that's not going far enough.

My actual recommendation to this committee and the full committee is to focus on what other countries like France are doing, which I think is the most effective. It requires a law of due diligence that forces companies, in advance, to show that they are not involved in modern slavery or forced labour and requires that the senior officials of these companies state in advance that they have checked to make sure there are no products coming in of forced labour, and there are penalties if they fail to do so.

I think we should look to Europe, to France for sure, to think about how we go further than what we have already. I'm not sure the ombudsman is a sufficient mechanism for that.

The Chair: We now move to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are so many themes to draw on here.

One point I'm taking away from the testimony of Mr. Browder and Ms. Kanji is that it seems that, in international human rights work, we've identified these mechanisms like the Magnitsky act, like doctrines, like responsibility to protect, but all these mechanisms require executive action. In many of these cases, it's not about the tools being available; it's a failure of executive action. I'm wondering if we need to develop these doctrines a little bit by compelling executives more effectively to act in cases like this, introducing maybe automatic triggers that require executives to impose Magnitsky sanctions and recognize genocide to uphold their obligations when they happen.

It hasn't been mentioned, but in the U.S., the imposition of sanctions came about not as a result of the executive acting on their own, but as a result of legislative action through the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which required the Trump administration to respond.

I'd be curious to hear from Ms. Kanji and Mr. Browder about whether they think we need to move beyond just giving tools to the executive and compel executive action in cases where there is clear evidence of genocide or gross violations of human rights.

Maybe Mr. Browder can go first, and then Ms. Kanji.

Mr. William Browder: I'll go first.

It's an excellent question and a real issue. In our Magnitsky justice campaign, we always said to ourselves that getting the law passed is only 50% of the work, and then the other 50% is actually getting it implemented.

We found an interesting tool to use in the U.S., because we knew this was going to happen. There is something in the U.S. legislation called the "congressional trigger". Nothing forces the U.S. government to sanction anybody. They can't be forced. But the congressional trigger does something very interesting. If the chairman and ranking member of one of six committees—the foreign affairs committee, the intelligence committee, etc.—propose a name to the U.S. government, the U.S. government has 120 days to respond: "Yes, we have sanctioned that person under the Magnitsky act" or "No, we haven't, and here is why." It's as close as we could get to having the legislature force the executive without taking away the independence of the executive—

The Chair: Mr. Browder, I'm going to interrupt you for a second and ask you to stop. It's due to interpretation.

What are we looking for, Madam Clerk? Is it a sound issue, or is it speed?

• (1215)

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): It's the quality of the sound.

The Chair: I don't know if speaking a little more slowly will help.

Does the interpreter—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm actually going to rush you, because—

The Chair: We'll give you the time. We'll make sure you get your time, Mr. Genuis.

Ms. Emilie Sabor (Interpreter): At this point, I believe it's a connectivity issue. I don't believe that improvements can necessarily be made.

Mr. William Browder: Can I carry on?

The Chair: We will need unanimous consent to continue. I think I see everybody in agreement. Thank you.

We will continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Browder, just because of time, could you tell us...? Basically, it sounds as if you're recommending a mechanism like the congressional trigger for our own legislative framework. Is that correct?

Mr. William Browder: I would recommend that, if possible, you come up with an amendment to the Magnitsky act that requires either a trigger or some type of compelled reporting to Parliament that gives you more oversight of why sanctions have been applied or have not been applied and that holds the government's feet to the fire.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Ms. Kanji, perhaps you could speak to that in the context of responsibility to protect and the obligations of states under the Genocide Convention. What do you think about the idea of stronger mechanisms to compel executives, things like automatic triggers or reporting requirements?

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: When it comes to the obligation to prevent genocide—which exists as a treaty obligation for all signatories to the Genocide Convention, even separate from the responsibility to protect—that responsibility is triggered for all states when the objective conditions of a serious risk for genocide occurring exist, as they exist in the case of the Uighurs, and as they exist in the case of the Rohingya.

The obligation is one of taking due diligence. The international system and the International Court of Justice recognize that not all states have equal power with respect to a situation to stop a genocide, but the responsibility of all states is to conduct due diligence to ensure that they are taking all concrete measures they can to prevent a genocide and to stop a genocide that's in action. Those already exist as obligations for Canada under international law. If there is a way of translating that domestically, I agree with Mr. Browder that doing that would be good.

With the Rohingya genocide, we saw a lot of confusion about what the trigger was with regard to the threshold of the duty to prevent genocide and with regard to discussions, even after the label of genocide had been applied, about whether this meant that now Canada's duty to prevent was triggered under the Genocide Convention. To be clear, as soon as the signs of serious risk occur, the duty to prevent is triggered. And I think that exists in the Uighur case.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

The crucial point is that it is as soon as the risk is present.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Alexeeva.

As we know, during the Holocaust, the Nazis wanted to exterminate the Jews. However, many other minorities ended up in concentration camps.

I'd like to draw some kind of parallel here. Do we know whether, in the current situation in Xinjiang, minorities other than Uighurs are in the camps of the Chinese authorities?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: In the camps in Xinjiang, there are even Kazakhs, Hui, and all the Muslim minorities living on Chinese territory.

It should be noted that before setting up these re-education centres in Xinjiang, the Chinese government tested them elsewhere, namely in Tibet. At the time, it created what was called re-education schools for Buddhist monks, a bit like summer camps for deviant populations. It sent Tibetan monks, political opponents, and people supporting on the Internet certain ideas that the Chinese government didn't support.

These pilot projects were tested in 2014 and 2015. When the Chinese government found not that they were working well, but that they were achieving the desired results, it increased the scale of the projects and set up real internment and concentration camps on the Xinjiang territory. This also affects other minorities, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, who live on Chinese territory.

• (1220)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

I have a question for Ms. Kanji.

Yesterday morning I was reading an open letter from the Chinese consul general about Hong Kong and the security law, which also affects Uighurs. This letter was published in the newspaper *La Presse*. It is disturbing, because I suspect that this kind of rhetoric is being used to change the western media discourse on China.

Ms. Kanji, have Chinese officials spoken in other western media? In your opinion, does this mean that the pressure on China is starting to increase?

[English]

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: I'm sorry, but I'm not clear on the question. They've published articles in other western papers about what specifically?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: The Chinese consul general here published a letter in a Canadian national newspaper praising the security law that applies to Hong Kong. This affects Uighurs as well.

Have you heard of other Chinese officials in the western world who are starting to speak out in the national media? Does that mean that China is starting to feel pressure, in your opinion?

[English]

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: I'm not aware of that, but perhaps some of the other experts on this panel, including Professor Alexeeva, might be more familiar with it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Ms. Alexeeva, can you answer that question?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: It is true that, for some time now, we have been seeing an increase in interventions by Chinese officials, particularly from the diplomatic corps. The Chinese ambassador to Great Britain or France is also speaking out. His words are increasingly assertive. We do not take into account the reaction of the public, the people who hear them or the journalists who ask questions. There is a scenario and we go straight to the point.

This has been a feature of Chinese foreign policy since Xi Jinping came to power. China does not want to hear from others or no longer wishes to do so. Every time it is criticized, for example for its position on Xinjiang, Chinese officials say that nobody criticizes China, that even Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey say nothing, even though in Turkey, the Uighur diaspora is particularly important. They say that even Muslim countries do not criticize China, so they don't see how this would concern western countries.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Vandenberg, you have five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much to all of the witnesses. It's always good to see University of Ottawa professors on the panel.

I do have a question first of all for you, Ms. Kanji. You mentioned in your testimony the use of disease, in particular, coronavirus, in the internment camps, if I understood you correctly. It was mentioned very briefly, but I'd like you to elaborate on it. Is this something that is happening in a deliberate way? Could you perhaps elaborate on that?

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: Again, because of the extreme secrecy and lack of access imposed on the region, it's difficult to know for sure. However, there are reports from Uighurs and advocates expressing great concern about the fact that even as China was closing many public institutions in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the concentration camps were not being closed. People were still being sent to labour camps, where they were obviously at great risk of exposure to coronavirus.

That indicates, at the very least, a great lack of concern for the protection of Uighur life. At worst, it cynically indicates a use of the coronavirus pandemic in order to effect pre-existing goals of eradication.

• (1225)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you. That's very alarming, in fact.

Dr. Mendes, you mentioned that we need a long-term strategy working with traditional allies, and maybe even an expanded Five Eyes. What exactly would a long-term strategy on China entail, and how would that involve multilateral partners?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: When you look at the ways in which you can get the seemingly second-most powerful superpower in the world now to act, you have to look at what it cares most about. What China cares most about right now is its economic growth. A lot of the Communist Party promise to its people is basically that as long as we promise you economic growth, you will basically abide by our being in power, and we can do whatever we want. That's the compact the Communist Party of China has made.

Well, that also depends on the rest of the world agreeing to work with China on that economic growth, be it in the World Trade Organization, be it in terms of investments or be it in terms of business relationships, etc. That's where I think it is critical to have not just the multilateral approach, if you like, but also a private sector approach, to have some type of way in which you can work with other countries in their private sector areas to find out how one can cooperate to prevent forced labour, to prevent child labour and to prevent the type of situation in which they may become complicit in human rights abuses—for example, providing surveillance technologies—and to further the human rights violations in those countries. I think over time that will be a much more persuasive impact on China than even making statements, etc.

I think it requires the democratic countries to work together. I think it does require political leadership. That's why I was very encouraged when former Vice-President Biden said that one of his first objectives would be to organize a democratic summit to deal with these sort of issues. We should right now be saying to the potential next president of the United States, "We're with you. We're going to work with you. We're going to help work with other democratic countries to see how we can put this in place at the political level, at the governmental level and at the private sector level, and to see how we can work together."

Hopefully, we have champions like Bill Browder, who has the credibility to promote that in the United States, as I'm sure he would do if he were asked.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Browder, in just a very short time, did you want to comment on that as well?

Mr. William Browder: I think there's such outrage right now across the world about this whole story. I'm speaking to you from the U.K., where there is similar outrage right now in the British Parliament about the Uighur situation. I've been testifying in the Australian Parliament about the Magnitsky Act, and there's similar outrage about the Uighur situation. There seems to be a big appetite to do all this stuff—

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Zuberi, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you all for being here.

My question is for Ms. Alexeeva, who is a professor at Université du Québec à Montreal.

You say that other minorities in Xinjiang province are also being targeted by government programs.

[English]

Are they only targeted because they are within the region, and are we only speaking about them because they're a direct corollary of what's happening to the Uighur people?

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: The Uighurs are actually the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang. Members of other ethnic groups, including the Kazakhs, the Kyrgyz and the Hui, are fewer in number and represent no more than 1% or 2% of Xinjiang's minority population. That is why we hear about them a little less. However, these issues have been addressed by Kazakh and Kyrgyz activists in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The problem is that the governments of these central Asian countries cannot stand up to China. In fact, they cannot openly criticize China because they are very dependent on economic relations with the People's Republic of China. Therefore, we hear much less about them, and that is unfortunate. Since the Uighurs have suffered more and are greater in number, we hear more about them. It is important to add that the Uighurs are not the only ones affected; all Muslim minorities in Xinjiang are.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: You're saying, then, that we're focusing on the Uighur people rightfully so, because there is a genocide, as many witnesses who have come forth have said, but that we are not necessarily focusing on these much smaller groups, despite the fact that it's the same program.

Is that correct?

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: Exactly, but the same can be said of the minorities in Tibet. Some southwestern minorities have also been sent to re-education schools.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Yes, but Tibet is a different case.

[English]

What I'm trying to get at is that Tibet is another focus; it's a separate program. While the individual who enacted the program within Tibet was pulled into the province of Xinjiang, from what I understand, to implement and reproduce the same program within that province, the program within the province of Xinjiang is primarily focused on the Uighur people, but these other minorities are, through a ricochet, being pulled into it. That's what I'm trying to get to.

Is that correct?

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: Yes and no. The person who set up the camps, Chen Quanguo, would be the target of any sanctions. He used to lead the Communist Party in Tibet. He brought his Tibetan experience to Xinjiang. The Uighurs are not the only ones living in Xinjiang. The Hui, the Kyrgyz and the Kazakhs live there too. Since the goal is to fight Muslim extremism, the ethnic issue is less important to the Chinese than the religion issue, in the end. People end up in camps because of their religion. It is also due to their ethnic origin, but that aspect is secondary. The religion issue is paramount to the Chinese authorities.

[English]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: So the defining factor is the religious factor—?

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: Yes.

[English]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: —in which the Uighur people are majority Muslim and the other groups are also majority Muslim and are therefore being pulled into this thing?

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: Absolutely.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, you have five minutes for questions.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start by asking a few more questions of Mr. Mendes. I missed an opportunity previously to ask a little bit more about private sector pressure and how we can utilize that tool.

You spoke a little bit about the Canadian ombudsperson not having the teeth, not having the ability to do the job they need to do. This is something that's very close to my heart, something I've worked on for a number of years.

Is it possible, in your opinion, that we could change the scope of the ombudsman's role to make it more effective?

Also, what further legislation would you like to have the Canadian government and Canadian parliamentarians consider as we go forward to make sure that we have good, strong anti-slavery legislation such as you indicate France has?

Could you speak a little bit to that, please?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: On the ombudsman, among the criticisms that civil society has made, which you should think about, is that it's primarily voluntary. It's not mandatory for the private sector to actually comply with what the ombudsman says. Secondly, it does not have the ability, under the Inquiries Act, to actually compel documentation, etc. It lacks the powers of investigation that could then allow the ombudsman to be seen as a powerful tool for companies to respect the rules on modern slavery, forced labour, child labour, etc.

My suggestion is to really look at what other countries have done, the measures that have basically met with approval from people who actually live this on a daily basis. For example, the French due diligence law requires companies, in advance, to make sure, and to produce documents to that effect, that they have looked into whether or not, in their supply chains, there are instances of child labour, forced labour, etc., and to sign off at the highest levels on that. If they don't, there could be real consequences. In other words, it moves from just a voluntary position to the ability to investigate and potential consequences. So that's one thing.

My computer crashed before I could answer the other question you asked me. It was a good devil's advocate question that you asked. It was, what could happen if the Chinese just ignore whatever we do and suggest?

Here's where I want to make something clear. I spent 15 years of my professional life researching in China, at all of the top universities. I even met some of the top people in the supreme court, etc. The one thing I came away with is that the Chinese government is not the Chinese people. The people I met, including one woman, five feet tall, who basically did the same thing as the man with two baskets who stopped the tank. She did that also. She did it because she did not believe that her own people should be crushing the students at Tiananmen Square. I think what we should be focusing on is what the government is doing. I have tremendous affection for the people of China as a whole. We should separate them from what is happening with the Communist Party of China, and indeed the present leadership of the Communist Party.

When I first went to China in 1993, I felt completely free to speak my mind on human rights. I actually met people from Xinjiang, and from Tibet, etc., and was amazed at how free and open the conversation was. At that time Jiang Zemin was the president. He basically allowed this to flower.

I think we should be focusing on the fact that this could be the predicament of the present leadership of the Communist Party of China and how the rest of the world deals with it. That's why we need a level of sophistication much, much higher than just quoting China as being the problem. It's not China that is the problem. It's not the people of China who are the problem. It's the present leadership. Even within that leadership there are grumbles that the idea of collective leadership has been tossed out, which Deng Xiaoping basically said should have happened in China.

We are playing chess at one level. What Canada has to do and what the rest of the democratic world has to do is to play chess on three or four levels, trying to figure out how we deal with this level of aggression. It's not just in terms of Xinjiang. It's there in Hong

Kong. It's there with our two Michaels. It's there in the South China Sea, and potentially could be devastating for the whole world. It could also be there in Taiwan.

What I'm suggesting is that, on China, Canada should play a lot on different levels to deal with the situation.

• (1235)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

With the time left we're going to have a third round. We're going to allot five minutes per party.

We're going to start with Ms. Khalid for five minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair.

I will address my question to Mr. Browder one more time.

You spoke about being in the U.K. Recently the U.K. Foreign Minister expressed his profound concerns over what is happening to the Uighur community in China. In response, in a BBC interview, the ambassador from China spoke out categorically and denied there were any concentration camps and stated that the Uighur people are living freely and happily in China. And he called the video we had spoken about in yesterday's testimony, of Uighur men being blindfolded and shaved and then put on trains, fake news.

The U.K. Foreign Minister did not go as far as calling this a genocide, but said that they would contemplate sanctions on China, on the Government of China.

What can we do to compel more of a united or organized front? It seems that individual states are very fearful of taking these actions against China, especially with the response of the Chinese representative that if the U.K. does this, we will act in kind?

Mr. Browder, can I have your thoughts on this, please?

• (1240)

Mr. William Browder: I watched that interview with the Chinese ambassador and so did most people here in the U.K. We were all appalled by his responses and heartened by the tough interviewing techniques of that particular person who interviewed him, Andrew Marr.

For what it's worth, there is a fever pitch inside the political establishment in every different party to do something about this Uighur situation and to do more than has been done so far. Dominic Rabb, the foreign secretary, has not yet—I stress the word “yet”—announced Magnitsky sanctions. I believe it would probably be easier to get him to do it if Canada were to do it in concert and to basically sanction the same four individuals. If the U.K. sanctioned the same individuals and Canada sanctioned the same four individuals that the U.S. sanctioned just recently, I think that would be the way to go.

As for my personal prediction, the U.K. has just recently implemented the Magnitsky Act, just two weeks ago. They sanctioned 25 individuals from Russia, roughly 20 from Saudi Arabia and a few from Myanmar and North Korea. I would be surprised if.... Given the situation with China, given what's going on with Hong Kong, given the fact that the U.K. has just cancelled the extradition treaty with Hong Kong and given the fact that the U.K. has offered Hong Kong British national overseas residents the opportunity to become citizens, it doesn't seem that great a step further to add those four people to the Magnitsky list and get this process started.

I may be reading the tea leaves wrong. It's very foolhardy to make political predictions, but my sense of the mood right now here in the U.K. is that something will happen. Dominic Rabb, the foreign secretary, has indicated to me that he has been in touch with your foreign minister about Magnitsky in the past, so I would hope that this would be something that they would be talking about together.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

The Chair: You have just under a minute.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Browder, we also heard yesterday about other organized co-operation across the world that could potentially have a lot of impact. We heard about the OIC as a potential way of pressuring the Government of China on fulfilling and maintaining human rights within their country, especially with the Uighur people. What do you have to say about that kind of pressure?

Again, in these conversations we've had, I think about.... So we apply this pressure. What does China do? Let's say a genocide is declared, the international community comes forward and we put in the sanctions. What happens to the Uighur people ultimately?

Mr. William Browder: The—

The Chair: I think we're going to have to leave it there. I apologize.

We're going to move to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have to go fast with my time here, so maybe I can have just a one-sentence answer, first from Mr. Mendes.

You've spoken about supply chains. Are you supportive of measures like the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which essentially creates a reverse onus that presumes that goods coming out of East Turkestan involve slave labour unless proven otherwise? Would you be supportive of those kinds of measures?

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: I would, and I would actually make a reference to the fact that now, under the Canada-U.S.-Mexico agreement, we should basically be following the U.S. If it's done under the agreement, then we should be doing the same thing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kanji, you've highlighted this sort of I guess schizophrenic approach, if you like, of the Chinese state towards Islam, where on the one hand they're involved in genocide domestically but supporting it abroad. They're seeking to eradicate Islam, but on the other hand, they're pretending to extend a hand of friendship towards Muslim majority countries; countries that have been very muted in

their response. This is part of the state colonialism of the Chinese state that you referred to. There are two questions about that.

First of all, what can we do to end support for Chinese state colonialism in Asia, such as perhaps withdrawing from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and not supporting the belt and road initiative? I would appreciate your take on that.

Secondly, how can we work with Muslim majority countries more effectively to build partnerships to oppose Chinese state colonialism and to have a unified response to what's happening to the Uighurs?

• (1245)

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: Participation in the belt and road initiative on Canada's part would be extremely fraught, given, as Professor Alexeeva has described, the extreme investment in exerting control over Xinjiang precisely because of its geopolitical importance for the belt and road initiative.

There are other kinds of economic participation in Xinjiang that are also problematic for the Canadian state. For example, Canadian mining companies are investing in projects in Xinjiang, which is very rich in resources. There are reports, for example, that Dynasty Gold Corp. is operating a mine in Xinjiang.

These are the kinds of projects on the part of Canadian corporations that need to be examined to ensure that Canadian entities are not themselves complicit in the colonial project in Xinjiang.

When it comes to building stronger partnerships with the OIC and Muslim-majority countries in addressing this issue, I think we have to understand that many Muslim countries are very economically beholden to China through the belt and road initiative and other infrastructure development projects at this point. It is precisely these economic interests and economic entanglements that are preventing Muslim countries from taking any kind of strong stance—and in fact actively whitewashing and supporting China's project—with respect to the Uighurs.

On the contrary, it is precisely that Canada isn't similarly economically beholden to these types of Chinese projects that enables Canada's to be a stronger voice.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

I'll transfer the rest of my time to Mr. Sweet.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. David Sweet: I just want to confirm what Ms. Kanji said, because I suspected there was a distinct link between the persecution of the Muslim Uighurs in East Turkestan and that of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma.

Do you see a clear link, in both cases, to CCP manipulation?

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: There are very strong connections between the genocide occurring against the Rohingya and what we are now moving to call a genocide against the Uighurs. We know that at an international level, China has been one of the strongest forces precluding strong Security Council action being taken with respect to the Rohingya situation, such that, even after the International Court of Justice delivered a very strong provisional measures decision supporting the rights of the Rohingya, the Security Council was unable to even put forward a statement supporting implementation of these provisional measures, because of the blocking role of China.

China is also invested, through the Belt and Road Initiative, in projects in Rakhine State, which is where the Rohingya population and the genocide against them is occurring. China is also directly economically invested in the persecution of the Rohingya.

Chinese officials have also made comments linking the supposed threat of Uighur terrorism to the supposed threat of Rohingya terrorism. Discursively, we also see very strong connections in the way that narratives about the terrorist threat supposedly posed by extremely persecuted Muslim minorities, who are far more the victims of extreme state violence than the propagators of violence.... We see very strong connections in the way these discourses are being deployed.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll give five minutes to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mendes, yesterday a witness talked briefly about this, and I would like to know your opinion. Could introducing Chinese technology in North America and Europe compromise activists' ability, by putting them at risk of retaliation from China and the Communist Party?

[English]

Mr. Errol P. Mendes: Yes. I think the introduction of Chinese technologies with companies such as Huawei—but not just Huawei, because there are other major technology companies in the United States and other places with the potential to basically include national security.... That's why I think it would be interesting to see, once Canada decides whether to not allow Huawei in its 5G project, what the reaction will be. This is something else that we have to factor into account in the way we deal with China, because no doubt there will be consequences if we do exclude them from the 5G.

This is where I think we should start the planning with our allies. Certainly Britain is going through this right now, and it's likely to face consequences too. So will other countries. That's why I think right now is the time to figure out how to work collectively with the democratic countries on ways to counter this type of blackmail.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That is very interesting. Thank you very much, Mr. Mendes.

Ms. Alexeeva, the Uighur population in Xinjiang has been oppressed by the Chinese government for decades, but the international community has only paid attention in recent years.

Can you explain why it has taken so long for the international community to pay attention to what is going on right now in Xinjiang?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: For many years, since the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese government has totally cut off all communications related to the Uighurs' problems and what is happening in Xinjiang.

After September 11, 2001, when the international community committed to fighting international Islamist terrorism, China very skilfully portrayed what it was doing in Xinjiang as part of international efforts to combat terrorism. In a sense, it used the international community's actions to cover up what it was doing in Xinjiang.

The Uighurs were really having a hard time getting out of China. To leave China, you need a passport and authorization. The Chinese confiscated the Uighur activists' passports. This was before the Internet made it easier to communicate, so people knew very little about the situation. The international community was so focused on fighting Islamist terrorism that it somewhat missed what happened. People were also much more focused on human rights issues in Tibet, so the situation in Xinjiang got a lot less media coverage. In addition, the problem was not as big as it is today.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Conversely, we have noticed that many people are now watching the situation. This subcommittee meeting is proof of that.

How are the leaders reacting to the fact that what's going on in Xinjiang is now getting a great deal of attention?

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: China denies that it is repression. It is still saying the same thing, that it is fighting terrorism. The Chinese always say that other countries are doing the same thing, citing the United States's Patriot Act as an example, so they will not be criticized about it. Every time people try to criticize China about the issue, to defend itself, China talks about laws or practices that it feels are similar. I am thinking, in particular, of Guantanamo.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, you have five minutes. You'll be our final questioner for this panel.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to all of the witnesses. This has been very interesting. I really appreciate the propositional nature of our conversation today.

I wanted to touch on something we heard yesterday.

We heard some very harrowing testimony from some of our witnesses on the use of sexual violence and rape within the territory. I'm wondering, Ms. Alexeeva, if you could comment on that and share any information you may have on that particular topic.

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: I am aware of acts like that, but I have never met or interviewed anyone who has been subjected to such violence. I repeat once again that this is nothing new. This type of violence against other minorities and the Uighurs has been happening for a long time. It's just that, now, the situation is so grave we can no longer ignore it.

Perhaps Ms. Kanji would have more information about it.

• (1255)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Ms. Kanji.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: When it comes to sexual violence against Uighur women, we know, for example, that there are government programs to have Han Chinese officials live in the houses of Uighur people in Xinjiang and even sleep in the bedrooms of Muslim women whose husbands have been detained in the concentration camps.

There's also a great push for intermarriage between Han Chinese men and Uighur women.

Since the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, sexual violence and rape have been recognized as genocidal acts. I think when we see these very deliberate efforts to transform the Uighur population towards a Han Chinese one, both through the deliberate in-migration of settlers to Xinjiang as well as these biological efforts at population engineering, they are very strong signals of the type of genocidal intent described in the genocide convention.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Can I ask, in terms of intermarriage and some of the sexual violence that's perpetrated in this area, with regard to the suppression of women's reproductive rights, does that still apply to these intermarriages, or is there a different reality for that?

Ms. Kanji.

Ms. Azeezah Kanji: The information that we have about the sterilization campaign is very new. It's based on official documents, and there is also still a great deal that we don't know. As I've said, a lot of what is happening in Xinjiang is subject to a great deal of secrecy. The information that we do have about the sterilization campaigns indicates that they are applied particularly to areas in Xinjiang where Uighur women are living, and that areas with more Han populations aren't subject to the same types of measures. When it comes specifically to these practices of intermarriage, I don't know that we have information about whether the sterilization campaigns are being imposed in the same way.

Perhaps Professor Alexeeva has more information on this.

[Translation]

Ms. Olga Alexeeva: As Ms. Kanji was saying, that is what we are hearing. We know little about it at the moment, but the fact remains that sterilization campaigns have been going on since the 1980s, that is, since the birth control policy came into effect. The policy was particularly enforced in Xinjiang and Tibet, despite everything the Chinese government may have said. Officially, Beijing said that the policy never involved minorities, but the reality is quite different. Sterilization campaigns have been going on for decades.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

This concludes our first panel of witnesses. On behalf of the entire committee, we want to thank you for your testimony, your insight and your advocacy.

At this time we are going to suspend for the next 15 minutes or so.

• (1255)

(Pause)

• (1315)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody. We have our second panel of witnesses with us.

I just want to say that we've had some really amazing, tremendous witnesses come forward over the last day and a half. I know this is going to be the same with our next witnesses, who are going to give us their own personal stories and accounts of what they have seen and heard and learned.

Both of our next witnesses are Uighur-speaking and do not speak English. We do have a Uighur interpreter. Kayum Masimov is with us today in person. Of course, our witnesses are via video conference.

We also have with us Omerbek Ali, a Uighur rights activist. We also have Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova, who is also a Uighur rights activist.

Before they get started, I also want to say that with consecutive Uighur interpretation, it's going to take a little bit longer. Translation is consecutive because of interpreter availability and technology considerations. There need to be six booths for consecutive third language, and because of physical distancing, it's only possible to have four booths. So when asking your questions, please pause to allow for interpretation time.

The study is now being televised via the House of Commons website.

We're going to start with an opening statement from Omerbek Ali.

You'll have approximately six minutes, but we'll accommodate. That does not include the consecutive interpretation time.

Mr. Omerbek Ali (Uyghur Rights Activist, As an Individual):
[Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:]

My greetings. I am in Holland right now. My name is Omerbek Ali. I was born on April 30, 1976, in Pichan County of the city of Turpan. I have a degree from the high technical college.

I was employed in the city of Karamay until 2006. While employed, I was subjected to wage discrimination. I was not able to live a normal life without sinning in disaccord with my religious Muslim beliefs. Because of my ethnic background and religious beliefs, I was constantly taken into custody and interrogated by police every month and even on a weekly basis. My house was repeatedly searched by police, and I was not even able to go out to the street as my ID was blacklisted. Because of all these barriers in my life, to continue living in a dignified manner I was forced to immigrate to Kazakhstan.

Up to 2014, I was involved in textile commerce and then I moved to furniture commerce and up to 2017 I was employed at Tumar travel agency as its deputy director, as a tourist guide and a Chinese language interpreter all at the same time.

In 2017, there was an Expo Astana exhibition and on an invitation from the Chinese side, I travelled to Urumqi. Once our business meetings were conducted and were over, I went to see my parents on March 25 around 11 p.m.

At 10 a.m., five policemen came to forcefully detain me, although they had no warrant for such an arrest on them. They brought me to the police station where they took away all my cash, my passport and all ID. From there they took me to another place that resembled a hospital. There I was subjected to a very close examination of my skin, kidneys, liver and urine.

All this time I had a black hood on my head. I was not able to see anyone. I became very afraid. Then they removed my black hood and they started examining my iris, my eyes. I became very afraid. I got the impression, seeing this kind of close examination, that I would be slaughtered. I became very afraid. Even now when I see white medical gowns, I am afraid. That is why I don't go to any hospitals for any reason.

● (1320)

The same evening I was taken to the county prison. About 30 or so men were detained like me. We were given one small steamed bun and a watery soup to eat for breakfast. For lunch we were given a boiled vegetable resembling an eggplant and again a small steamed bun. The same was given for supper. To get that food, we had to sing three Red songs before and after the meal. These songs were about the Communist Party and Xi Jinping, and in Chinese it goes, "Thanks are given to the CCP, to the motherland, to President Xi. Wishing President Xi good health, wishing the motherland prosperity and strength, wishing unity and harmony to the people of our country".

On April 3, I was taken to another basement of the prison in Karamay city at police headquarters. There I was subjected to very cruel tortures. I was electrocuted. I was hung up. I was whipped with wires. Needles were inserted. I was beaten with rubber batons and pliers were used on me. Under all these savage torture tools I was forced to confess to crimes I have never committed. The accusations were crimes against national security, inciting, organizing and covering up for terrorist activities. They were even telling me I

was trying to build a terrorist organization or I took terrorists under my wing. Patronage accusations were brought against me.

I categorically refused to sign these documents. I insisted on my innocence. I asked them why I was forced to confess to crimes I did not do, why they were torturing me, that I am an innocent man. They asked if I was a Kazakh, a Muslim, a Uighur. They said there is no difference, that we're all terrorists, and they forced me to sign documents. I resisted signing these papers.

● (1325)

Along with me, there were other detainees. In one cell, there were about 37 to 40 people. In one hallway, there were 17 cells. There were 34 wings on each side, with four more buildings like that. Anyone who was detained in these places was forced to confess to such crimes, which they did not commit. They were all subjected to torture. Psychologically, it was very demanding. No person would come out in good health after seeing such education.

● (1330)

The Chair: Could we conclude.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur*]

Mr. Kayum Masimov (Head, Uyghur Canadian Society): It was too fast. I couldn't keep up. I'll try to wrap up.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

In Karamay city, which has a population of about 500, there were seven detention centres like this. In every detention centre, there were 5,000 to 6,000 detainees. I was moved around, and on top of the torture I was enduring, I was also handcuffed and had my feet shackled, so I had to carry about seven kilograms of heavy metal on my body at all times.

I spent seven months and 10 days in such a detention centre. There is no way that someone in good health will come out in good condition after seeing this. It's just heartbreaking. I have seen people disappear and be taken away. It was the daily experience we were living through.

The Chair: I'll thank Mr. Ali for being with us. He is in Holland. Prior to joining us here, he had just come out of a 14-hour immigration meeting in Holland, so I thank him.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur*]

Mr. Kayum Masimov: He's leaving now. He's thanking all of you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is he not going to be with us for the questions?

Mr. Kayum Masimov: It's okay. He will be with us.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you. We really want to hear from him.

We are now going to move to Ms. Jelilova for her statement. Again, it's for approximately six minutes. With interpretation, that would double the time.

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova (Uyghur Rights Activist, As an Individual): [*Witness spoke in Uyghur and Russian, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you very much and my greetings to you all. Thank you for this opportunity. I would like to tell my tragic story and talk about the tragedy of my people.

My name is Gulbahar Jelilova. I am a citizen of Kazakhstan. All my ancestors, all my relatives, were born in Kazakhstan. I am the mother of four children. We have a very limited time frame but I will try my best.

For 20 years I've been conducting a small-scale business in Urumqi. In 1996 I went for the first time to Urumqi, East Turkestan. I was detained on May 22, 2017. I was actually kidnapped from the hotel where I was staying in Urumqi city, Hotel CU.

Three policemen and two policewomen took me away from the hotel and they started interrogating me. They were forcing me to sign documents. I was in an interrogation period from eight o'clock to 11:30, and the documents that were given to me I was not able to understand. I was asking them, "I don't know Uyghur or Chinese. Please bring me a consular representative or interpreter to explain what is it I have to sign." Later on I learned that in the regional paper it was written that I was Gulbahar and I was committing terrorist acts.

I didn't sign and I was taken away to another prison. It's the prison called the Sankan. It's the third prison. I entered inside and they started immediately taking samples of my blood and urine. I was stripped naked, and after that they gave me the yellow-coloured uniform. On the same day, I was put in shackles which weighed five kilos.... They were taking samples of my urine to check whether I was pregnant or not. If I was pregnant, then they would do an abortion on the spot or take me away to the prison.

As you might see on the picture, there are a number of cells. There is a picture of a cell. I was taken to cell number 714. It's exactly the same cell I was put in. What you can see is a transparent toilet, and everyone can see what is inside.

• (1335)

Once a week we were given two pills to digest. There is a small window in the wall and they would give us a cup of water and these two pills and we had to swallow them and show them that they had been consumed. Every 10 days we were given injections in our hands and they would not say what kind of medication it was.

We would not take a shower for months. We were forced to sleep on the metal bed. There is no hygiene, there is no running water, and this is a very bad sanitary situation. In one month all detainees got fleas in their hair and we were all shaven afterwards. We have had rashes and sores all over our bodies. We would not take a shower for months.

Sometimes we were taken away. There were two types of prison cells. One is underground with cameras in it and there is one outside where no cameras are present. Detainees were taken away in black hoods and the guardians would do anything they wanted to do to us.

We would be seated in a chair like this. They were insisting and inquiring and asking us again and again to sign documents. I would say, "Why would I sign something I don't understand? What is written there?" They would keep insisting and insisting, and if I would not sign the documents they would take me to the prison.

They once took me away to the open air prison with no cameras and I was seated forcefully on a chair for 24 hours without food or anything. I was still resisting and they were beating me and electrocuting me. At the end there was one guardian who came out and he took his pants down and he forced me to commit something, which I'm not going to talk about. This is what's happening.

• (1340)

I witnessed some girls taken away for 24 hours. They had been tortured. They'd had needles put under their nails. They'd had needles put in their cheeks. Some girls would disappear and we would never see them again.

They even made fake ID for me claiming that I was a citizen of China so that the consul representative of my country would not look for me. They were torturing me like this.

I spent time with girls who had been put on death row. In fact, right now they don't shoot prisoners. They make them fall asleep by injection.

The papers I am showing are original. These are letters written by my children on my behalf claiming that I was not a terrorist, and they were seeking to have me released. My children sent these letters to Putin, and one letter written by my children went to the United Nations. After that, I think I was released because of these papers.

I lost 20 kilos. I lost vision in my eyes. I had no hair.

I was released. For one week I was fed. I was taken care of. They gave me makeup. My hair had turned white, so they dyed my hair a different colour, all these things. They issued me a visa, a normal visa. They talked to me and told me that I had to remain silent, that if I wouldn't stop talking, they would reach me, because China has long arms. They said they would reach me and kill me anywhere in the world.

• (1345)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jelilova and Mr. Ali, for your personal accounts and for the courage you've demonstrated. I know the members are looking forward to asking you questions.

With that, we are going to start with Mr. Sweet for seven minutes.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you to both of you for your testimony. I want to be careful asking you questions because I certainly don't want to cause you any more pain than you've already endured.

Mr. Ali, do you still have family in East Turkestan?

Mr. Omerbek Ali : [*Witness spoke in Uyghur, interpreted as follows:*]

My dad was killed in a concentration camp in 2019. My mother and my other siblings, brothers, still remain in East Turkestan.

Mr. David Sweet: Has your family been threatened now that you have spoken out about your treatment?

• (1350)

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Verbal threats are a very normal and routine practice. They've also been subjected to physical abuse and actions.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Ali, how did you eventually escape from those who were torturing you? Were you released like Ms. Jelilova was, or did you have to make your way by stealth to get away from them?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

There were a number of factors. Number one, I have dual citizenship with Kazakhstan. Number two, my wife was a UNHCR asylum claimer, residing in Kazakhstan for 11 years. While in this process of waiting for asylum hearings by the UNHCR office in Kazakhstan, she was also active in the media demanding my release.

I believe these factors contributed to my release from the Chinese prison.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you. That's all I have.

May both of you be blessed by Allah.

My colleague will take over the rest of my time.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. I would echo the comments of my colleague.

One of the issues we're talking about at this committee is supply chains and companies that are involved in benefiting from slave labour in East Turkestan. I wonder if either of you could shed any light, from your observation, on companies, brands or industries that are or were operating in East Turkestan. Do you have any guidance for us on addressing the issue of trying to respond to the involvement of companies in this oppression?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I will try to say a few words on this topic.

I will talk about my personal experience. I was detained in Karamay for eight months, and 90% of those detainees were bureaucrats, professors, teachers, or those involved in the oil-producing industry. Although there is no tangible proof, I can claim by my experience among those detainees, these people, that they certainly do not need any educational facilities to get further education.

I would estimate that, because of the international pressure, right now the Chinese state is trying to distribute the bulk of the detainee population to the Chinese interior. In Karamay, 20% to 30% of detainees have already been transferred. They work in dire conditions. Although there is no proof, I can estimate. My guess is that right

now, again because of the pressure, detainees are being transferred into sites in the interior of China.

The hidden genocidal campaign of China is still in progress. I would argue that if a commission were delegated by the U.S. or Canada to investigate the facts on the ground, and these commission team members would go house to house to investigate things, then much more information would come to light. Then we would know the true extent of the situation on the ground.

I thank you all.

• (1355)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If I can follow up to clarify the question, I was wondering if there are specific companies—western companies perhaps, and Chinese state-owned companies—operating in a visible way, where people in the camps are forced to work for those companies, and if the witnesses have any information about that.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I think it's a given that there are activities like these. They exist because China is trying to hide what is happening; it is transferring detainees into interior China to spread out and close these centres. It is a given that, yes, Uighur work is implicated in production.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Could I ask as well if there are tourists from other countries outside of China who people see or interact with? I know that there have been some cases, such as, for instance, a well-known McKinsey corporate retreat in Kashgar. Is interaction at all possible between local people and those coming from outside? Are people who come from outside able to see or to have any awareness of what's going on?

• (1400)

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

There is no such possibility because this is all restrained. There is no such thing possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Could Ms. Jelilova comment as well?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I will tell you about my personal experience. I went as a tourist on many occasions, from Kazakhstan. I was conducting business. I am an ethnic Uighur, but when I would travel into the region local Uighurs would not try to approach me, and I would not try to approach them to make any conversation. They were too afraid to talk to me.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I only have a minute left—

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Can I add something? I would like to ask maybe for guidance. I was detained for one year and three months. I was accused of terrorism. Having endured so much suffering, I'm just asking, who will pay the price for doing this to me? Who shall I address or what do I do? After one week of release, I have put down all the names of those who have been tortured, in order not to forget them.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just quickly, if I can—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Genuis. We're moving to Ms. Vandenberg now for seven minutes, plus the consecutive interpretation time.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you, Ms. Jelilova and Mr. Ali. I really want to thank you for your courage in speaking out.

In particular, we're very sorry that you have to relive some of the most difficult experiences, but I do assure you that it is making a difference that you are going on the record with this.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

This is our duty.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

Ms. Jelilova, you've held up some documents throughout your testimony. I was wondering if it's possible for you to share those with the clerk so that they may be shared with the committee.

I'd like to go back to your testimony and clarify some of the things you said that were somewhat alarming. You mentioned the injections and the pills that you were forced to take. You didn't indicate what you think the intent of those pills and injections was. Do you know what that caused in your body?

• (1405)

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

So the girls would cease having menstrual cycles. If we were hungry, we would not feel hunger and we would lose any feelings of pain, so we were numb after all the procedures.

I was not able to recall my own children. I was lost.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I am so sorry that happened to you. I hate to ask more questions about this, but you mentioned—

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: My psychology is not good.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I think you are a very strong and courageous woman, a survivor. Thank you for speaking.

You mentioned in your testimony, that instead of shooting people, they're giving injections. Do you believe these injections are intended to kill people?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

These detainees knew in advance that they were given death sentences, so they would have to wait one, two, three months, and when the time came they would put black coats over their heads and they were taken away.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: This is absolutely horrifying, but I think it's important to get all this on the record.

We've heard in some of the testimony that the intent of all this is to destroy the souls and eradicate the Uighur people. Do you think that is the intent?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Yes, it is a wiping us out by elimination. I was begging them to kill me instead of enduring this torture, where they would put a black hood on me and take me out to rape, to torture me, so I was pleading with them to kill me.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I am very grateful that you survived.

Mr. Ali, you mentioned that when you were first detained they brought you to a medical facility and they were checking your liver, your skin, your irises, your kidneys. We hate to think it, but why do you think they were doing that?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness speaks in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I am a well-travelled person. I have travelled internationally and been employed by a travel agency, so I knew beforehand the experience of Falun Dafa followers, of their organs being harvested all the time. My guess is that there is a drive called “halal organ harvesting”. That is the only explanation for why I was examined so closely, because I was checked very closely, not like an ordinary person. I witnessed in one week several people being taken away from our cells, and they were gone. There is a lot of evidence in my personal experience.

As well, because there is no video evidence or hard proof, the international community was not paying attention to our claims, and it was not given the much-needed attention we were asking for, although we have been testifying for a long time about these incidents.

• (1410)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I want to thank you very much for testifying today. It's very important that the international community hear it.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness speaks in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

There's no doubt about it happening: organ harvesting is happening right now. People have been transported to interior China for organ harvesting, and many people see this. It's even happening with three-year-old children who are taken away to camps, and you might have seen on videos of the crowded facilities with 50 to 60 children in one room. What is happening right now is an ethnic cleansing; it's a forceful assimilation and, on top of that, commercialized slave labour. This is happening right in front of our eyes.

The Chair: We'll move to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe for seven minutes, excluding interpretation time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: First, I want to thank you very much for being here. You are brave, strong and courageous. Your testimony is powerful and will serve a purpose.

Because you are here and you are telling us what is going on over there, because you have experienced it in a horrible way, I'd like to know what you expect from the international community.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

If I gave my opinion to the world, people would laugh at me.

In March 2019, I testified before a UN tribunal in Geneva. I described in detail what had happened. So far, the international community has not responded because of trade with China. They are putting economic interests first. It is very sad, but that is the reality.

• (1415)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Can Ms. Jelilova also tell us what she expects from the international community?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Russian, interpreted as follows:*]

My sincere thanks to the Canadian government for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of my people, the Uighurs. I would like Canada to be actively involved in stopping China's genocide of the Uighur people. We know that Canada is against the forced sterilization of women.

I am currently living in Turkey, where there are many Uighur refugees. I am asking you whether it would be possible to give refuge to us because we are a stateless people.

I am not afraid to die.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In her testimony, Ms. Jelilova said that she was told the Chinese government had a long arm. Does she feel threatened? Has she been threatened since she has been in Turkey? The question is also for Mr. Ali in Holland.

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I live in Turkey in a constant and permanent state of fear. I am followed by the Chinese police. The Turkish police even approached me to ask me who those people following me were. We receive threats over the telephone. It is very real, and I live in fear.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Go ahead, Mr. Ali.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

As I said, I'm not afraid to die, but since leaving Kazakhstan in 2017 and since giving my first media interview, I have been constantly harassed and threatened with death. I have received death threats. Even when I travelled to Japan, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland, I was constantly harassed. I have received harassing telephone calls. I am not afraid to die; I will make it through this ordeal.

• (1420)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I don't know whether you can answer my question. I would like to know whether you feel things have gotten worse since Xi Jinping took power.

Mr. Kayum Masimov: I did not understand your question.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Has the situation worsened or changed since Xi Jinping has been in power?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Things have certainly gotten worse since Xi Jinping came to power. China has become a trading powerhouse. This powerhouse mistreats its own people. Nearly 1.5 million people are currently being detained in East Turkestan. The situation has indeed worsened a great deal. It is now much worse.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you so much. You have been heard. Frankly, we very much admire you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, you have seven minutes for questions, excluding interpretation.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Chair.

I would also like to take a moment to thank you both for being with us today and for sharing your very challenging stories. I know you are putting your own health, your own safety and the safety of your loved ones at risk by being here. I know we are asking you to relive memories and experiences that are indescribably painful. I want to make sure I echo the sentiments of my colleagues. As they have said, we will hear your testimony. This will make a difference. We will take your stories forward.

Similar to many of my colleagues, my first question for you is, as parliamentarians, what can we do? What would you like to see us do right now to help you and to help the Uighur people in China?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

The first thing I would ask Canadians to do is to act according to international law and insist in your interlocution with China to shut down these concentration camps, or even maybe, as the first step, to secure a communication means with our relatives. We have not even means to call and ask, "Hi, mom", "Hi, brother", or "Hi, father; how are you?" We cannot even do that, a simple little thing. Afterwards, we will get our things; we will see things getting better and improving.

• (1425)

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I would call for a boycott of Chinese products, a boycott of the importation of Chinese goods. Secondly, I would encourage letter writing and sending out emails calling for a shut down to immediately stop the genocide of Uighurs.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I am going to ask a few questions, in a bit more detail. I apologize for making you relive these painful memories.

Ms. Jelilova, I have a question for you? I know you mentioned you have four children. I'm also a mother. I wonder if you could talk about what happened to your children or where your children went while you were incarcerated.

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

When I was detained, I was 52 years old. Now I am 56. At the time of my detention my youngest child was 15 years old, and the eldest 35. While I was detained, my elder child took care of the younger ones. At the time I was very much worried about their well-being. In fact, I do worry about them because they remain in Kazakhstan.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Maybe just further, could you tell me, from your experience or from things you've seen, do either of you have an understanding of how children are dealt with if they are younger, if they are not in a situation where an elder child can look after the younger children?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

It is an unknown issue. Even in my family, when my sister was taken away to prison and when my brother was taken away to prison, their children were taken to the state-run, prison-like system, where they've been completely brainwashed. Even up to now we don't know what happened to them. Are they alive? Are they dead? Have their organs been harvested for sale? We have no means of communication by which we can know.

It's the same thing with parents who live, let's say, in Turkey. There are many Uighurs living in Turkey. They do not know what happened to their children because all communication has been cut off.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

When I was detained in prison, I had been detained together with others: the youngest girl was aged 14 and the eldest detainee was 80 years old. They were all innocent. They committed no crime at all.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jelilova, Mr. Ali.

We're going to go into a second round of questions. In consideration of where you are—you're in Turkey and in Holland—and the time there right now, I know it's late, it's later in the evening, we are going to ask each party to ask a question or two of the witnesses. That's how we will conclude.

We're going to start with Mr. Zuberi.

• (1430)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: First off, I want to thank you both for testifying. I wish you peace, strength and fortitude. Thank you for your courage. This is very meaningful.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: You're welcome.

You made an account of what happened to you personally. I wanted to know if what happened to you was the norm of what you saw within the camps. I can anticipate your answer.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I would emphasize, first and foremost, that there is no such thing as school, in principle. There is no such thing as schooling. These are concentration camps.

I am a citizen of Kazakhstan. I was detained and taken into prison for eight months without any legal procedure.

We are talking about millions and millions of Uighurs who have been taken away from their households and distributed and put into deserts, into areas of production—millions and millions. This is a reality on the ground.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: This is happening to everybody, essentially, who is in the camps.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

This is very common. It's a standard thing. We are treated like toys. Anyone, anytime, can be taken into prison for no reason at all. Imagine, we're talking about millions of people who have been taken away for no reason.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: For my second question, I'd like to follow up on another point.

For the Uighur people within Turkey, are there any protections that the Turkish government is providing, or do you feel that the government is not in a position to protect you from threats and other forms of harassment that can be happening within the country?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

The reason is the information blackout in Turkey. For instance, I wasn't able to get residency even though I was accorded a lot of media interviews. My own children are not able to go to school. There are no schooling possibilities available for my children. In my opinion, this is happening because of Turkish commercial interests vis-à-vis China. Basically, we've been stranded there without any means to advance.

• (1435)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Let me respond to something Ms. Jelilova said about accountability. What is going to happen to those who are involved in these horrific crimes? This is an issue that we as a committee have to grapple with, trying to end impunity for those involved in these crimes and ensure accountability. One way we try to do it is through Magnitsky sanctions, saying to those who are involved in these abuses that they will not be able to move their money or themselves to another country; that they will face consequences if they ever try to leave.

I'll ask two questions together, and you can respond to both as you wish.

The first question is to ask for your take on appropriate accountability mechanisms.

My second question is about potential vulnerability in general within Kazakhstan and other countries in central Asia to Chinese state influence. What is the nature of the discussion about what's happening to Uighurs in central Asia? What can we do to strengthen the collective response and reduce the dependency of countries in and around China, a dependency that limits their ability to respond effectively to what's happening?

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I will share with you my own personal opinion about this issue. Thank you for posing such an interesting and important question.

I would invoke the resolution adopted by the U.S. Congress on Uighur people. If Canada could only follow this, it would be a good direction.

Then unite, together with such democratic like-minded countries as Japan and the EU Parliament, and announce an embargo on China. Unless we take concrete steps to turn up the heat on the commercial interests of China, the death camps in East Turkestan will continue to be operational. These measures are very much about a united front of like-minded countries against ongoing Chinese influence.

With regard to central Asia, I would personally think that we cannot and should not expect much from these countries. These countries are completely corrupt. They are being taken hostage by current Chinese influence. I would rule out influencing central Asian states at all at this stage.

• (1440)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it possible to hear from the other witness?

The Chair: Ms. Jelilova, did you have something to add?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Only because I am a citizen of Kazakhstan and because of the pressure put out by my children, was I able to get out of this prison. On the contrary, if I were a Chinese citizen, I would have been murdered by now.

Because of the Chinese proximity to Kazakhstan, after remaining for only 20 days in Kazakhstan, I fled to Turkey. Once in Turkey I started giving interviews. In Kazakhstan, this is impossible because of the Chinese presence and the deaths, murders, in Kazakhstan by the Chinese. It is impossible to operate in Kazakhstan.

The Chair: We go now to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

The Chinese government says it reintegrates people who graduate from the camps.

First, is it true? Secondly, are people ever really free after they leave the camps?

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I, myself, am a witness. I saw people detained in Chinese prisons for 15 to 20 years. Although people were released, they would be arrested and imprisoned again after a certain amount of time.

My time in prison was relatively short, but I have trouble breathing now. As you can see, my lungs aren't good. I came out with a skin disease. My health is very poor. That was my condition when I got out of prison. As you can tell, I have trouble breathing.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

I'd like to add something and ask a question, if I may.

First, I was somewhat of an interpreter. I'm fully bilingual. I speak Chinese fluently. I was a manager making roughly \$2,000 a month. My circumstances were good. Did I need some sort of degree?

Second, my father, who was retired, was fluent in Chinese. He had a degree. Did he need another degree of some sort?

These are intellectuals, business people, relatively wealthy people and the like. So I ask you, do people like that need a degree?

• (1445)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's exactly what I wanted to hear. Thank you very much, Mr. Ali.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will now move to Ms. McPherson for a couple of questions.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Chair.

I believe I'm the last questioner. I feel compelled to pass the microphone to both of our witnesses.

At this time, knowing that this is a bit of a moment for you to share, is there anything we haven't touched on today or that you feel we need to know in this committee and haven't had a chance to discuss yet? I'd just like to open it up to both of you to take a few minutes and give us anything we may have missed or any information you'd like to share with us before we conclude today.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Once I was released from prison, I gave an interview to a BBC journalist. During my interview, I mentioned the case of the Uighur DNA sample collection. I touched on organ harvesting. I also warned about bacteriological weapons development being conducted by China. I was warning in every interview and in every meeting, be it in Japan or in the Czech Republic. At the time, nobody was paying attention to this. Suddenly, in the current context, everyone has woken up. Now they're saying, "Oh, Omerbek told us about this." My message is that we have to pay attention to the CCP. If these atrocities don't stop, we will get even worse results, and worse is about to come.

I would like to conclude by asking that we unite our international efforts with all the various NGOs, be it Amnesty International, interparliamentary commissions or different states and like-minded countries, to stop these atrocities and unite in this anti-Chinese campaign in order to stop all that is happening. I would ask the Canadian government to be considerate of Uighur refugees stranded in third party countries like Turkey. These Uighur refugees are becoming stateless. They are facing challenges over there. On humanitarian and compassionate grounds, I would like one more time to draw your attention to this topic.

Again, thank you very much for your time.

• (1450)

Ms. Gulbahar Jelilova: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

My plea to the Canadian government is to put pressure on the Chinese republic to, first and foremost, shut down these camps. Muslim people, Uighur people, like all ordinary people around the globe, should have access to the Internet. They should have access to phones. They should live in a dignified manner, as human beings.

The Chair: First off, let me just say from halfway around the world that we would like to thank you, Mr. Ali and Ms. Jelilova, for being with us and for your heartfelt testimony to this committee. I know that I speak on behalf of everyone here in this room, all the committee members, those watching over the Internet and our interpreters.

I do want to thank our Uighur interpreter, Kayum Masimov. Thank you for your service, sir.

I also thank our clerk for organizing this and being able to bring you to us from, as I said, halfway around the world.

We thank you.

Mr. Omerbek Ali: [*Witness spoke in Uighur, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now suspend.

• (1450)

(Pause)

• (1600)

The Chair: Welcome, everyone.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on February 20, 2020, today is the second meeting of the subcommittee on its study of the human rights situation of the Uighurs.

Today's witnesses are appearing by video conference. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. I want to thank our clerk and our technical team for assisting the witnesses with their equipment and connectivity.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either the floor, English or French audio channel. Should any technical challenges arise, for example in relation to interpretation, or a problem with your audio arises, please advise the chair immediately and the technical team will work to resolve them.

At this point I'd like to welcome our witnesses. You'll be the final panel of this second day of this study. We're glad you're with us. Today we are going to hear from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the director of human rights initiative, Amy Lehr. Then we will have, from the Uyghur Human Rights Project, the senior program officer for research and advocacy, Dr. Elise Anderson. As an individual we have Guy Saint-Jacques, consultant and former ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China.

You will each have six minutes to do your introductory statement. After those statements, we will be moving to rounds of questions by the members.

With that, we will start with Amy Lehr.

Ms. Amy Lehr (Director, Human Rights Initiative, Center for Strategic and International Studies): Distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing and offering me an opportunity to speak. I'm happy to see you engaged on such an important and pressing topic.

As noted, I'm the director of the human rights initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a large non-partisan think tank based in Washington, D.C. Over the past year my program has been conducting research on forced labour in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, or XUAR.

Our work combined open-source research in Mandarin with interviews with those subjected to forced labour. Our findings to date have confirmed that forced labour practices in the region are part of the Chinese government's efforts to repress ethnic and religious minorities through what they call re-education. Forced labour also combines with widespread surveillance in the region.

Because China plays such a dominant role in many international supply chains, products entering the U.S., Canada, Europe and other countries are at risk of being tainted by forced labour. Today I'll explain how forced labour in XUAR is part of a larger system of ethnic minority repression and is relevant to western supply chains, and we'll provide some policy recommendations that might help effect change.

As has already been documented, the Chinese government has forcibly detained and held in extrajudicial detention facilities, also known as re-education camps, more than one million Muslim minorities in this region. The goal is to cut the minorities' ties to their religious and cultural identities and bring them into mainstream Han Chinese culture. This is seen as a way to enhance stability in the region.

The Chinese government's clampdown on ethnic minorities is believed to be the largest-scale detention of religious minorities since World War II, and according to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, may amount to crimes against humanity.

In the name of combatting religious extremism and enhancing security in the region, the government subjected minority detainees to re-education and vocational training within and outside of the detention facilities. As you've probably heard earlier today, this training includes intensive Mandarin classes, praising the CCP, and in many cases, job training.

As the government goes through this process, factory work has revealed itself to be an integral element of the effort. The government has used labour transfer programs to move thousands of minorities into manufacturing positions in XUAR's factories and in other Chinese provinces where they are, in some cases, subjected to forced labour. The full extent of the forced labour is impossible to know because access to the region is so limited.

This re-education campaign is closely linked to the government's poverty alleviation and pairing programs. The poverty alleviation program seeks to move minorities from their traditional rural villages into factory work. The government requires local officials to meet quotas of rural minorities transferred to work, and that creates pressure to find people to transfer, whether or not they want to go.

• (1605)

Because of the high level of surveillance in XUAR and the risk of being sent to a detention camp or prison, it is presumed to be very challenging for ethnic minorities to resist transfers. The government also provides financial incentives for companies to re-educate and employ ethnic minorities. Our research and interviews indicate that at least some of those transferred to work are not doing so willingly, and are often significantly underpaid. This, in turn, raises serious forced labour concerns.

These re-education efforts and poverty alleviation programs I discussed are combined with what's called the government's pairing program. Under this program mainland Chinese provinces are partnered with specific regions of XUAR. Each pairing program has a sectoral focus based on the needs of pairing mainland firms, including the textile, electronic and agricultural sectors, among others. Those companies that are in the pairing program are pressured to open factories in XUAR and may be asked to receive minority

workers, both within XUAR and in their factories in the rest of China. Some of those workers have been re-educated, some are re-educated in detention facilities and others are part of poverty alleviation. Again, because we don't have access to the region, it's really hard to know just the scope of forced labour within these programs and within these companies participating in the pairing program.

We've been doing some research on what XUAR produces. It's a key cotton producer, but it also produces and exports a number of other products, including electronics and machinery, plastics, apparel and agricultural goods. These sectors are all priorities in the pairing program. There's a question of whether this is creating a risk of forced labour in these other supply chains as well, and this deserves further research.

I just want to touch briefly on XUAR's role in global supply chains, looking particularly at textiles and apparel as a case study, because we understand those linkages better. I would note that other sectors may also include substantial components from XUAR.

XUAR produces around 20% of the world's cotton and is the third-largest producer of cashmere in China. China is the world's largest cashmere producer. We have found that XUAR directly exports few products globally. Rather, they're transformed within China, in many cases. Apparel was 25% of XUAR's international exports in 2019, and footwear was another 10%, but this severely understates XUAR's role in supply chains. Most of the cotton, for example, is shipped to other regions of China to then be incorporated into yarn, textiles, etc., and this is much, much harder to trace.

One challenge is that China is one of the world's two largest cotton producers, the world's largest yarn producer, its largest textiles producer and its largest apparel producer. Because XUAR cotton, and increasingly, yarn, are incorporated—

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lehr.

Ms. Amy Lehr: Thank you.

The Chair: You will have an opportunity to elaborate, I'm sure, during the question period.

Now we are going to move to Dr. Elise Anderson for six minutes.

Dr. Elise Anderson (Senior Program Officer for Research and Advocacy, Uyghur Human Rights Project): Thank you.

Greetings to the members of the subcommittee. I'm very honoured to be testifying today. I'm sitting before you as an advocate for Uighur human rights, and as a scholar whose research has focused on Uighur cultural expression for more than a decade.

Just this month there's been a significant shift in expert analysis of the Uighur human rights crisis. Authoritative institutions and experts have begun to label what is happening as a campaign of probable crimes against humanity, and likely, genocide. For many years the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, has been systematically destroying the institutions that long served to maintain and pass on Uighur cultural knowledge. Uighur language journals have been shuttered. Poets and musicians have been disappeared by the hundreds. Mosques have been bulldozed, and more than one million living, breathing individuals have been taken away to camps and prisons en masse.

Recent investigations of forced labour and forced sterilization, including the alarming statistic that population growth among Uighurs in two prefectures declined by 84% between 2015 and 2018, have shed light on the government's totalizing campaign of repression.

The CCP claims it must assimilate the Uighur population to quell unrest and stamp out terrorist activity, but these are excuses that mask the horrors happening on our watch. By politically indoctrinating and forcibly assimilating Uighurs, the CCP is attempting to remove their loyalty to any source of authority other than the CCP itself. In conscripting Uighurs into involuntary work schemes and turning the Uighur region into a manufacturing hub for inexpensive labour, the CCP is securing control of Uighur lands for resource extraction and global trade, while ripping apart Uighur families and communities in the process. In other words, the relationship between the CCP and the Uighur region is, at its core, a colonial one, recalling the dark and painful histories and present circumstances of liberal democracies such as the U.S., Australia and Canada, vis-à-vis indigenous peoples.

The CCP is enacting a genocide because it is a colonizer. Land and subjugation of the local people are dual prizes in its end game. The CCP has sought totalizing control of the Uighur region since it came to power in 1949. It established autonomy in the region in 1955. That autonomy was and remains a sham.

Many Uighurs, meanwhile, profess an almost spiritual connection to this land, their homeland, something that outside observers far too often overlook in our analyses. In the 1990s, for example, as the Chinese state incentivized Uighur farmers to sell their lands, the beloved folk musician Küresh Küsen urged his brethren not to do so, singing, "The land is great. The land is mighty. The land is the source of life. Brother farmer, I beg of you, do not sell your land".

During my own time living in the Uighur region over the past decade-plus, I was struck by how much the concepts of land and homeland still seemed to shape everyday life for Uighurs. In 2015, an acquaintance of mine and her aunt took my mother, who was

visiting, and me to visit the tomb of a revered Uighur scholar near Kashgar. This tomb had long been a holy site of pilgrimage, but is now a state-designated tourist spot. At the tomb a sheik described the history to us, and we wandered the grounds where, off in the distance, beyond the tomb and the state-built museum attached to it, there lay a cemetery on a mountain of sand. Deep green poplars, the quintessential marker of the region's oasis towns, stood in stark contrast to the sea of sand that lay even further beyond it.

My acquaintance led us to a stream of clear, pure spring water, and we crouched down together. "Can't you see why people would see this place as holy?" she asked me, as she scooped spring water into a bottle. I could.

For Uighurs, their land has a sacred significance as a source of meaning and life. That land, along with the home that it inspires and the very lives that play out on it, are now under grave threat. The Uighur crisis is one of the most pressing humanitarian concerns in the world today, and it demands a multi-faceted policy response by governments and multilateral actors around the world.

I have several recommendations for Canada, which I will elaborate on in the Q and A if you're interested in taking them up.

First, focus on refugee admissions. Second, punish and deter harassment of Uighur Canadians. Third, block forced labour imports. Fourth, prohibit companies from exporting high-tech tools to China. Fifth, impose coordinated, targeted sanctions on perpetrators. Sixth, make legal determinations as to whether the Uighur crisis constitutes a genocide.

• (1615)

It's time for the Government of Canada to act on the global promise of "never again".

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Anderson.

Now we're going to hear from Monsieur Guy Saint-Jacques, Canada's former ambassador to China.

You have six minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques (Consultant, Former Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China, As an Individual): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to take part in today's meeting.

Today, I'll be talking mainly about the increasing level of repression since 2012, when Xi Jinping became the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. Then, I'll turn to the Canadian government's policy on China.

As you know, I spent 13 years in China, during the 1980s and 1990s, and I was Canada's ambassador to China from 2012 to 2016. I saw things in China change, including the country's economic growth and treatment of its ethnic minorities. Ever since the Qing dynasty conquered Xinjiang in the 18th century, there have always been tensions. The measures taken by the Chinese have heightened tensions, culminating in 2009 with the riots in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. The Chinese government subsequently became very concerned about the emergence of ISIS.

Keep in mind that, in 2013, China began experiencing a wave of unprecedented attacks on its territory. You may recall two high-profile attacks: the October 28, 2013, suicide car bombing in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, killing two and injuring 40; and the March 2014 mass stabbings at the Kunming railway station, killing 30 or so. China was experiencing a terrorism problem and President Xi Jinping wanted to fix it. He cited a serious threat to social stability to justify imposing extremely strict security measures in Xinjiang, including the installation of cameras, the setting up of checkpoints, the closure and destruction of mosques, the ban on beards and veils, and tight control over people's movements.

Of course, since Chen Quanguo was appointed general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party for Xinjiang in August 2016, the repression has continued, with the opening of re-education camps and the detention of at least a million Muslims.

• (1620)

[*English*]

Now I would like to talk of the Canadian experience in Xinjiang. When CIDA was active, we had a very important assistance development program that was mainly focused on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, but also helping women to get into business. There were a number of very successful projects in Xinjiang.

We also have had a very sad consular case inasmuch as a Canadian citizen, Mr. Huseyin Celil, was arrested in Uzbekistan in the spring of 2006 and extradited to China. We have never been able to have consular access to him. Of course, despite this, consular officers have met members of his family during visits to Xinjiang.

I went to Xinjiang with a delegation led by Senator Plett in May 2013 as part of the activities of the Canada-China Legislative Association. We raised the case of Uighurs, our concerns. We had meetings at the Islamic centre, but it was clear that all this was staged. After the departure of the delegation, I travelled to Kashgar. I met with the family of Mr. Celil. I also made representation to the local authorities to try to improve the situation of Mr. Celil—all this to no avail.

I would add that it has become very difficult to discuss human rights issues with China since Xi Jinping came to power. We are now dealing with a China that is very confident, assertive and aggressive, that refuses to receive lists of cases of concern, and that rejects what it considers foreign interference in its affairs. Further-

more, it has succeeded in controlling the UN Human Rights Council, where even Muslim countries will refuse to condemn China for what it is doing in Xinjiang.

What should the Canadian government do? In my view, it is now impossible to remain ambivalent on China, after seeing what it is doing in Xinjiang, in Hong Kong, in the South China Sea, not to mention the heavy price that we have been paying since the arrest of Meng Wanzhou. It's very clear where Xi Jinping wants to take China, as he reported to the 19th party congress in October 2017. He said that China has succeeded without adopting western values and he gave China as a model for the world.

Of course, we need to continue to engage with China to address major global issues such as pandemics or global climate change. However, as trust has been lost, it is time to take more measures to indicate that we will take a more realistic approach in our dealings with China, one based on the protection and defence of our interests and values such as freedom of speech, of religion, and of equal opportunity for all.

We should also react quickly to cases of intimidation or interference with Canadians of Chinese origin, or Uighurs, or Tibetans living in Canada. There should be zero tolerance for such cases.

Of course, we also need to work more closely with like-minded countries to reinforce the multilateral system and to underline that rules apply equally to all. We should also agree on common positions and similar reactions when China acts as a bully or engages in hostage diplomacy. This applies also to whether sanctions should be applied against Chinese officials. We need to be in good company.

The message to China should be simple: We welcome you to play a larger role on the international scene, but you have to abide by all international treaties and rules and stop acting as a bully.

I'll be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

To all of you, thank you for your opening statements.

We'll now move to questions. In this first round, each questioner will have seven minutes.

We will start with Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you very much, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Welcome, Mr. Saint-Jacques.

• (1625)

[English]

First off, thank you very much for your service to Canada. It's greatly appreciated.

You mentioned the difference in China since Xi Jinping has become the leader of the CCP. I posed this question to one of our other panels yesterday and I'd like to pose it to you.

Since the great "Yellow Emperor", and Mao Zedong trying to take on that role and the Great Leap Forward, the multiple purges that happened under Mao Zedong, as well as the Hundred Flowers and all those incidents that cost millions of lives, we haven't seen anybody who really resembles Mao as much as Xi Jinping does. I wonder if you would share that observation.

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: I would agree with you. In fact, what's happened in the last few years since Xi Jinping came to power is a move going back to the Mao era in the way that propaganda is handled. The fact also is that he has dismantled the legacy of Deng Xiaoping in terms of how succession is supposed to take place. He has also slowed down the economic reforms and he's applying an approach similar to Stalin with regular purges of opponents.

Despite this, there are still some voices in the party that are against what he is doing. That's why I think that, if we are taking action to oppose China, this should help those forces fight the Communist Party to try to move the country. A number of people are very concerned by the direction that Xi Jinping has given to the country.

Mr. David Sweet: Dr. Anderson, you have two Ph.D.s and you have quite a bit of expertise around Asian studies. I'm wondering if you have observed that there's a link between the very terrorizing treatment by the CCP against the Uighur Muslims and the manipulation of Burma and the Rohingya Muslims and how they've been treated and really purged out of Burma.

Dr. Elise Anderson: It would be a very interesting and worthwhile structural comparison to make between those two cases. To be very frank, given my area of expertise, I wouldn't feel fully comfortable ruminating orally on that today, but I will say that I think these are both absolutely atrocious, horrendous crimes against humanity that we all wish we were not seeing in the 21st century. It falls on the responsibility of governments like Canada, the United States and other multi-actors around the world and multilateral institutions to address, because the crimes that are being committed as part of both of those atrocities are absolutely horrible.

Mr. David Sweet: Ms. Lehr, you've been on the ground in Burma in the past in your career.

Our former ambassador, Mr. Saint-Jacques, just mentioned the silence of Arab countries. I want to link that back to some previous testimony of one of our witnesses who said that silence is because of the new Silk Road initiative and that many of the Muslim countries have significant investments from the Chinese Communist Party and have been silenced by virtually being bought off. I wonder if you have any opinion in that regard.

Ms. Amy Lehr: It's very interesting, the difference in the reaction from the majority Muslim world to what's happened to the Rohingya versus the situation in Xinjiang.

With the Rohingya, there's an International Court of Justice case that's being funded by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It's a very different situation, and I do think China's a really important player in the world now, and, yes, is building around the world and providing loans, and that's influencing the Uighurs. It's just a different force to reckon with, and it's going to take more effort. As hard as the situation in Burma has been, the situation in Xinjiang is going to require all different sorts of actors working together to address the private sector, governments like Canada to multilateral institutions.

• (1630)

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Saint-Jacques, we had Bill Browder on earlier, and he, of course, is the champion of the Magnitsky act and, because of Sergei Magnitsky, he was saying he feels that one of the most effective things Canada could do would be to use that surgical capability of naming and sanctioning those individuals who were involved in this Uighur terrorization. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: I would say that in theory it's a very useful tool, but the problem is that if you look at the hot spots around the world, so far the Canadian government has been reluctant to use it.

I would say that of course we know China can be vindictive; we have already paid a heavy price. I think the Canadian government would need to look at this in terms of consistency in how we should use this act. This is why I said earlier that we should work much more closely with our allies to develop common responses and a common attitude.

I must say that, faced with all of the evidence we now have on what's happening in Xinjiang, we need to take common measures. Among them would be deciding whether we should lay sanctions against Chinese officials, and of course be conscious that probably China will want to retaliate. That's why I said earlier that we need to be in good company.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move to Ms. Khalid for seven minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for your compelling testimony. I'm just going to seek some points of clarification.

Dr. Anderson, in your recommendation as well as in your remarks today, you referred to what's happening to the Uighur community as crimes against humanity, and one of your recommendations was to investigate whether a genocide has occurred.

Can you please provide a distinction between the two?

Dr. Elise Anderson: Crimes against humanity and genocide are two distinct legal concepts. I will qualify the statements I'm about to make by reminding you that I am not a legal expert by any means, but my understanding is that crimes against humanity focuses on the circumstances that might lead, for example, to the killing of a large number of individuals, whereas genocide is not necessarily about killing. It can include it, but more specifically focuses on the destruction of groups and a series of circumstances and conditions that lead to the destruction of those particular groups.

I would happily yield my time for comment to either of my copanellists, if they feel that they can more adequately address this question.

Thank you.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Ms. Lehr, you also used the same terminology as Dr. Anderson, if you'd like to provide some insight.

Ms. Amy Lehr: At a high level, the difference is that crimes against humanity involve a widespread and concerted attack against the civilian population, but it might not be based on, let's say, their identity as a group.

In the case of genocide, there's the fact that you are trying to destroy a group in whole or in part and that there's an intent to do so.

They are thus legally different, and the intent element of genocide in particular can be a bit challenging to establish.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Ms. Lehr, in your remarks you talked about forced labour. We've heard many proposed recommendations from other witnesses concerning how to deal with this very challenging issue of supply.

There are two kinds of recommendations before us. One is the launch of the Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise, which Canada has just embarked upon. We're wondering whether that would be an effective way of monitoring or following the supply chain.

The second that was recommended arose from the USMCA's having provisions in it now that restrict the use of forced labour in supply chains.

What are some of your recommendations on how Canada can monitor its supply chains to make sure they are free of forced labour, especially from the Uighur community?

• (1635)

Ms. Amy Lehr: To really understand this and understand what the risks are, you ideally would not only be looking at direct exports into Canada, or imports into Canada from Xinjiang, but also the indirect implications on your supply chains. That's the harder part.

In my experience, what you need is someone with Mandarin skills—strong, strong, written Mandarin research skills—to be looking at Chinese company documents and government statements to identify some of these companies that are involved in the pairing program, getting subsidies for re-educating people, etc. That takes research.

I think that if you were to perhaps have your ombudsman...they would need funding to hire that person with that expertise. You can't do it in English. They might be able to help to provide watchlists of companies to be aware of and also the sectors to focus on. I think that would be quite helpful.

I also would suggest that when you think about global Magnitsky or your equivalent—those kinds of sanctions—I agree with the ambassador that they need to be used on a multilateral level. From everything we know about sanctions, that's what makes them effective. However, you can target companies too, or government offi-

cial, at least with U.S. global Magnitsky you can. I think that's another opportunity. Frankly, company officials may care a lot more about coming to the U.S. and Canada than CCP officials...somewhere in Xinjiang. I just want to plant that idea as an option.

Another element you could consider, and this could be broader than just to Xinjiang, would be having the kind of ban on goods produced with forced labour that the U.S. has. Again, you could do that in a way [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. It's not anti-China; it's just trying to manage forced labour issues across the world.

Obviously I think that engagement with your company in trying to get them to start proactively looking at their supply chains is really, really key. In the U.S., there's a really strong push for that which we'll be seeing over the coming weeks.

I hope that helps to address some of your questions.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Ms. Lehr.

I have one last question.

Mr. Saint-Jacques, you mentioned the number of times you were advocating, in your role as ambassador, for Mr. Celil, who was imprisoned in China.

Over the whole span of trying to advocate and provide consular services, what was the response that you received from the Chinese government?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Unfortunately, the response was always consistent. They said he had acquired Canadian citizenship illegally, and for that reason, they said he was therefore Chinese. They said also that he had not officially renounced his Chinese citizenship. Although the Chinese citizenship law says that if you acquire a foreign nationality, you automatically lose your Chinese citizenship, despite their own law, they kept saying that he was Chinese.

They always refused our entreaties to see him, to ensure that he would have access to a lawyer. We were always stonewalled, including I recall when Prime Minister Harper came to visit during my time as ambassador. I think it was in 2014 that he raised the case of Mr. Celil, and he was told that—

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today. We're very glad to have them, because the work of this committee is very important.

My first question is for Mr. Saint-Jacques.

Yesterday, we heard from Irwin Cotler, a former justice minister who is very involved in human rights advocacy. He told the committee that Canada should declare what is happening in Xinjiang a genocide and that it's time to stop being passive.

I'll ask you outright. Do you agree with that approach, Mr. Saint-Jacques?

• (1640)

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Personally, I think what's happening in Xinjiang is a genocide. It's hard to come to any other conclusion when you know what constitutes a genocide and when you see all of the control measures the Chinese government has introduced to curb female fertility, not to mention the detention and treatment of Uighurs in so-called re-education camps.

However, before we can declare it a genocide, we have to work with our partners. It's unfortunate that all the efforts of the UN Human Rights Council, in Geneva, were in vain. That illustrates how difficult it is right now to address these issues. Let's not forget that China controls the council.

I think we need to work with our allies. If we surround ourselves with the right company, not only can we declare it a genocide, but we can also take similar steps simultaneously.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: If Canada were ever to declare a genocide on its own, before taking a bilateral or multilateral approach, how would such a statement affect Canada-China relations, in your view?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: They would deteriorate further. Since establishing diplomatic ties, nearly 50 years ago, we've never had such a poor relationship. Traditionally, China's approach is to punish anyone who dares to criticize it. Canada would have to expect to be targeted by very severe measures, which China would take to scare other countries.

That's why I think we need to work with other countries to establish a common position. Our shared western values are at stake.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: On another topic, in 2018, it was decided that President Xi Jinping would remain in power until his death. This is contrary to what had been done previously, when the head of state changed once the presidential term limit had been reached.

How do you think things can change when Xi Jinping can remain in power indefinitely?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: It's very tough to imagine how, since he's been able to get rid of his opponents through the anticorruption campaign. That's what he used to eliminate potential successors. That said, there are still pockets of resistance in the Chinese Communist Party, as I mentioned earlier. We need to find ways to encourage those individuals.

The level of discontent in China is high. A lot of people are unhappy with the economic situation and Xi Jinping's policy, which hurts China's interests.

Again, I would say we need to find ways to help those forces, while assuming that Xi Jinping will likely remain in power for many years.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Saint-Jacques.

Ms. Lehr, you mentioned supply chains in your remarks.

As far as you know, can we already identify private western companies involved in the Xinjiang supply chain?

[English]

Ms. Amy Lehr: It's certainly possible to identify companies that are involved in that supply chain. It just takes research. Again, I don't know what the quality of your import data is. For me, I can look quite easily; I just pay a little money and I get access to a commercial database that shows me everything shipping directly from Xinjiang. I can see who it ships to. It's quite easy in the U.S. I know that the quality of data is not always publicly available for other countries. I just don't know Canada as well.

I think that's step one. That's the easy part. It's quite easy to not get direct imports from Xinjiang if you're a company. All of them should be looking at that, at this point. They've been warned about the problem. The issue will be looking deeper in the supply chain at companies that are sourcing from there maybe four or five tiers away. That requires the kind of research I mentioned earlier.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

As regards what's happened in Xinjiang, you seem to have had access to the stories of many survivors.

Can you share details of the abuses suffered by the people there?

[English]

Ms. Amy Lehr: Our interviews were focused primarily on the issues around forced labour, but we did get a sense of the larger picture. We also talked to them about some of the conditions of detainment. The people we talked to were just ordinary people. They weren't all Uighur. They were from different ethnic groups that were Muslim. They were mothers and fathers, normal people who had been just swept up and detained, sometimes in multiple detention facilities. Sometimes they were severely physically abused, depending on the facility they were in. Sometimes they were just hit with wooden sticks when their Mandarin was wrong, or were not allowed to go to the bathroom without a guard and things like that. It was just demeaning and exhausting and frightening. Then they were put into forced labour.

Again, we were really focused on that element. We learned that they were working for either no income or pay that in the course of a year they should have been paid in a month. They were constantly guarded. They were living in dormitories and with guards. They were going on buses with guards to the factories every day. There was policing of the factories, and security. They had no idea when this would end, or how it would end. All their devices were monitored.

In terms of that level of state control and surveillance, we've never seen anything like it in the history of the world.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Ms. McPherson for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much for your testimony today. This is very interesting.

I have questions for all three of you, but I think I'll start with Ms. Lehr.

You talked a lot about the forced labour, and certainly I know we unfortunately cut you off a bit during your introductory comments. I'd like to give you a little space for that. One of the areas that you talked about was poverty alleviation, and that it was being used as an excuse. Could you talk about that a bit more for me, please?

Ms. Amy Lehr: Yes, I'm happy to do that.

What we know about poverty alleviation is taken mostly from public documents, but a little bit is based on our interviews as well. It's a program which, on its face, sounds quite benign, but it's the idea of, with all of these minorities who are backwards and poor, living in rural areas, moving them into factory jobs, with the assumption being that that's what they want. There are quotas, so government officials are expected to meet certain quotas.

Typically, as a human rights lawyer, I would say when quotas like this are imposed and there are punishments for not meeting them, you end up with some really bad situations. In this case we're concerned that people are being forced to be part of poverty alleviation, transferred to work, when they don't want to, because the government officials are trying to meet their quotas.

Some of this was confirmed through our interviews. We weren't looking at the time for people who had been in poverty alleviation programming, but we happened to talk to people who had been working side by side with people who were part of the program and had been transferred to factories. It was just like the former detainees were being paid, again, minimum wage for a month over the course of a year, having to live in dormitories separated from their family, watched at all times, not there by choice. They'd been told that if they didn't engage in this programming and go to work, they would be sent to a detention centre.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have a very quick follow-up on that. When they are sent to poverty alleviation...or into this forced labour, or into these dormitories, their children are left behind, I'm assuming. What do you know about the results of that?

Ms. Amy Lehr: I believe that Adrian Zenz, who may have testified for you already, has written more about this.

One of the really key concerns is that all these children are being left with no caretakers, because villages apparently in some areas are almost empty. There's no one to watch them and they become wards of the state and are sent to state-run schools.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have one last question for you before I move on.

You talked a bit about making sure that we're encouraging companies to explore their supply chains. That seems to me like a nice idea that they would do that of their own volition, which may not actually be the case in some multinational corporations. What are some of the steps we could take to maybe be a little more stern than encouraging?

• (1650)

Ms. Amy Lehr: A fairly soft approach is to require reporting on how they conduct the due diligence on their supply chains, how they report that, what was it, and did they find linkages to Xinjiang.

There could be just a pure transparency requirement, and that alone may have an influence, because those companies won't want to say that they found Xinjiang buried in their supply chain. In the U.S. we have the Tariff Act, and that can be used to seize goods produced anywhere in the supply chain with forced labour. In the U.S. that is a pretty powerful tool. I'm not aware of Canada having the same tool, but I was suggesting that, in general, given your government's strong stance against forced labour, it might be worth considering a measure like that.

Those would be some of the ways you could at least start to impose extrication on companies, and you could ratchet it up from there if they're not responding.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Excellent.

I might ask Dr. Anderson a quick question as well.

You spoke a bit about the resource extraction in the area. I'm assuming that there is evidence of forced labour being used with some of this resource extraction. Perhaps you could talk about that, and maybe about whether or not there are Canadian or international companies that are also implicated in this resource extraction that's happening in the area.

Dr. Elise Anderson: Yes, we do know of a long history of international corporations. I'm not totally certain about Canadian corporations in particular, but international corporations. One example is coal and other parts of the energy sector, and so forth.

Most of the forced labour we're seeing in the current campaign, however, is connected to these industries that Ms. Lehr has already mentioned. Textiles, electronics, agriculture, food production, tomatoes and even ketchup, which are making their way around the world, are directly involved, not even just implicated, in these forced labour schemes. We're seeing a lot of different things.

However, with this resource extraction that I talked about, that is linked really closely to a form of settler colonialism that has only been increasing in the region since the CCP came into power. It is deeply tied to the transfer of non-Uighur or non-Kazakh, non-Kyrgyz, non-indigenous peoples from outside the region into it to work for a basically paramilitary state organization that is extracting resources such as coal and oil, and so forth. It's a related system, not completely separate and not completely the same thing either.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have only 40 seconds. Very quickly, can you confirm, then, that obviously the mineral and resource sector wealth within that region would also be a contributing factor as to why some of these impacts are being seen?

Dr. Elise Anderson: Absolutely, those minerals and other resources are a contributing factor.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Chair: That leads us into our second round of questions. There will be five minutes for each member.

We'll start with Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: First of all, thank you, everybody, for joining us and providing your expert testimony.

I'd like to flesh this out. We spoke about supply chains. We spoke about the province, XUAR. We didn't speak about Uighur people and other minorities who are being transferred out of the province into the mainland and how those supply chains are impacted. Can you speak a bit about that?

Ms. Amy Lehr: I'm happy to start.

There was an important report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, or ASPI, that went into this in some detail.

I mentioned earlier these programs around pairing, the pairing program where the mainland companies are paired up with different parts of Xinjiang, and then also poverty alleviation and labour transfers.

What we've seen is that some of these minorities are being transferred, actually in quite large numbers, tens of thousands, to other parts of China to work in supplier factories. What the ASPI report indicated is that some of those factories are, in fact, in the supply chains of major global brands. Therefore, that's a new risk that needs to be better understood and that companies certainly should be able to identify and address.

• (1655)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: There are about 83 companies, big-name companies, brand name companies, named in that report.

While we look at what is produced within the province, in our analysis at the same time we should also be looking at what is produced outside the province that is coming from forced labour.

Ms. Amy Lehr: That's right.

One of the things we're trying to understand better, which I mentioned, is that with the pairing program, certain Chinese provinces that are participating, their companies have basically helped dictate the sectoral focus of that particular pairing program. Therefore, you might even be able to say that in this province the highest risk is going to be in electronics and food production, but in another province it might be apparel. If you do the research, there are some indicators of risk.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Okay.

Can you speak about Canadian technology, or western technology in general, supporting the surveillance of the minorities we're talking about here within the province?

Ms. Amy Lehr: If it's okay, I'll take that on and then maybe anyone else might want to follow up.

It's a great question and one that needs, frankly, more understanding. We know that actually the surveillance in the province is primarily being conducted by Chinese companies and that really, in a way, this is like their laboratory for experimentation. They're getting lots of funding from the state, so they're getting very good at things such as facial recognition and machine learning. However, there are components they need from the west, DNA sequencers, so they're getting probably some components and parts from the west, and there have been a series of U.S. government actions to try to address that as recently as yesterday.

Also, the other thing to look at that people aren't considering very much is who is investing in some of these Chinese companies,

and whether there is U.S. or Canadian venture capital that's going into the Chinese companies that are actually directly involved in the abuses.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I don't know if anybody else has contributed to that but I just want to throw one thought out while you do contribute. Can we also tie in the Chinese papers and how new information has come out which shows there's a program going on from the top. Could you factor that into your answer please?

Dr. Elise Anderson: I will just jump in to address this point about technology and the high-tech tools.

I'll just say a number of these Chinese companies, as Ms. Lehr just said, are really involved in the surveillance that packages what is happening together. They have deep and close ties to universities, research centres, and other researchers around the world. We've seen cases of U.S.-based research labs that have scientists who have been collaborating and not really realizing in some cases that they are collaborating on something so sinister ultimately.

From our perspective we think it is vital at the Uyghur Human Rights Project to make sure that tech firms in China who are doing work like this and are contributing to the system cannot buy components from companies outside. That is one way to help stop this from happening.

The Chair: We will go to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'll just pick up with Ms. Lehr right where we were.

There are a number of companies, Nuctech, Dahua, Hikvision, and these are Chinese companies with close relationships with the Chinese state that we know play some role in supplying security technology. In fact, we also know there are cases where the Government of Canada has considered purchasing technology from these companies. Also with Dahua and Hikvision our pension fund is invested in these companies. I wonder if you would recommend that we take a simple step and prohibit this kind of action going forward.

Ms. Amy Lehr: I would assume that your pension fund has social and environmental screens that it uses when it invests, and if so it would seem to me that if they took those seriously, it would have implications for those kinds of investments and that would be an opportunity to try to act.

I also think obviously what the U.S. has been doing with export controls is worth looking at, because there's been a whole series, as you're probably aware, of different export controls from the U.S. that really focus on the sale of certain kinds of technologies to these companies based on the fact that they're involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang as surveillance and technology companies. Those are two obvious opportunities.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Those are then the screens and export controls in place. I'm just digging further into the supply of components. For instance, with a company like Immervision that supplies component parts for Hikvision cameras, do you think as well that we should seek to limit investments in companies that are supplying components that are then used by companies that are supplying technology as part of this repression?

• (1700)

Ms. Amy Lehr: Elise may want to follow up. I would just be strategic. The U.S. is trying to focus on particular technologies that are really vital and maybe where U.S. companies play an important role in providing them. It may not be feasible to block every single component that could possibly be used by Hikvision, but what are the ones it would hurt?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I suppose that aside from legal blocking anybody watching this or listening to this should make every effort to not be investing in components because there's what we can do legally, but then there's also individual responsibility to try to avoid these kinds of investments.

Dr. Anderson, did you want to comment on this further?

Dr. Elise Anderson: I think Ms. Lehr put it very pertinently.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. I have another question for you then.

What we're seeing in some parts of China, for instance with the Christian community, is efforts to co-opt religious practice and control it. The Chinese state says, "Okay, you can have your churches but you have to take down the crosses and replace them with images of Xi Jinping." I wonder if we see any of this kind of co-opting happening in the Muslim context, or is it just kind of a straight out destruction effort.

Dr. Elise Anderson: My organization, the Uyghur Human Rights Project, has documented the actual physical destruction of a number of mosques and other holy sites over the last few years since this most recent campaign of atrocities began.

The state has removed stars and crescents from the tops of mosques. It has removed important signage. It has bulldozed some mosques and replaced them with new structures. It has turned cemeteries into parking lots, and so forth. We are seeing destruction that is similar in scale across the whole of Uighur society.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

Ms. Lehr, you mentioned import data, and I think we should go back and look at what's available on the Canadian side. However, is there an opportunity for us to share import data more effectively among like-minded countries, to benefit from the data that, for instance, the United States is gathering and to have a coordinated response as we track what's in our supply chains?

Ms. Amy Lehr: That would be very helpful. It's not easy to track global supply chains. We've found basically that we're able to understand what's coming into the U.S., at least directly, but we have no idea what's going on with Europe, and I don't believe we

currently have access to data for Canada. However, maybe we just didn't try to buy it.

I also believe some stuff is transshipped to Canada through the U.S., so you could at least maybe see that, but yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Vandenberg, you have five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much to all the witnesses.

I'll start with Ambassador Saint-Jacques.

I noted you said in your statement that if we are to act, we need to be in good company, that we should be working with like-minded countries such as the Five Eyes.

Do you have suggestions as to how we can help lead and mobilize that type of effort multilaterally? For instance, we recently saw that even New Zealand didn't sign a statement on Hong Kong that we did with our other Five Eyes partners. Is there a way this can be done?

The flip side of that same question is the concern you raised that if countries move by themselves, they then become the warning, to warn off other countries, so it needs to be done in conjunction. How do we actually do that?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: There are efforts that need to be made to sensitize all countries that in fact we are all in the same boat and we have a lot at stake here. You may have heard this notion that in fact it's China that is changing us more than we are changing China, and I firmly believe this is what is happening.

In the case of Canada, if you look at the engagement strategy pursued by the federal government in the last year and a half since the arrests of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, China has succeeded in forcing Canada to mute its voice. We have expressed very mild comments or criticism on what's happening in Xinjiang and what China is doing in Hong Kong or in the South China Sea.

That's why I was saying that we have to make more efforts to try to reinforce the multilateral system. That applies not only to international trade, but also to human rights, because what we are seeing now is a gradual erosion. China is very active and has been very successful with its belt and road initiative, which some of you have referred to as the "silk road". They are providing loans and forcing countries to avoid criticizing China.

I think, again, we have a lot at stake. It's a question of using evidence such as we have heard today to tell others we cannot remain quiet on what's happening in Xinjiang. Let's discuss seriously what measures we can take together that would force China to think twice.

The Chinese leadership is very concerned about the image of China, although under Xi Jinping you are seeing a China that is a lot more aggressive, arrogant and assertive. Still, they are concerned. They need the world, because 19% of their GDP comes from international trade. Again, the message to them should be that you have to change your ways and you have to stop acting like a bully; otherwise, we won't have trust in you and we will restrict contacts.

• (1705)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

Ms. Lehr, you had a number of recommendations at the end of your statement. You gave them very quickly, and I'm wondering if you want to take this time to elaborate on some of those.

Ms. Amy Lehr: I did touch on them in some of my answers to questions in order to get them in. I'm sorry; I thought I had a little more time than I did for my statement.

One of my suggestions, because I know there's a Canadian version of the Global Magnitsky Act—it's called GloMag in the U.S.—is that you think about how that could be applied to not only CCP officials involved in abuses but also potentially to companies and their officers in China. It's an approach called "network sanctions". A lot of us think it's really how you can make sanctions effective.

I also thought that it would be helpful to maintain and update public watch-lists of companies, particularly Chinese companies, that are known to use XUAR forced labour or are suspected of doing so. If you look at our report from October in 2019, we outline how we think you could create that.

Again, the idea of having seizures of products produced by forced labour, including Xinjiang forced labour, would create, I think, the motivation for companies to get on top of this. You could think about government procurement practices too. That's one that I'd like the U.S. government to think about more as well. Where do you procure your stuff? Is it coming from Xinjiang? That's something the government itself has control over. Is it affected by forced labour?

Most of all, I think, you can do what you want in forced labour in terms of affecting company behaviour, but how do you work with allies? How do we have a multilateral or at least a multi-faceted approach to this so that it really starts to have the impact that we need to have? The U.S. has been doing some things on its own, often, and it obviously hasn't led to the results anyone wanted. We really need you all.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lehr.

We'll move to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like the subcommittee to benefit from your diplomatic expertise, Mr. Saint-Jacques.

I'm not sure whether you saw the letter written by a Chinese diplomat that appeared in *La Presse* yesterday. It was about Hong Kong and the new security law, which also relates to Uighurs. It's

disturbing. I suspect that, by speaking publicly, he was trying to change the western media's discourse on China.

To your knowledge, have any Chinese officials made public statements in other western media? In your experience, does that mean the diplomatic pressure on China is starting to be felt?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: I think the diplomatic pressure is really mounting.

You may have heard the term wolf warriors, which refers to the much more aggressive strategies being used by Chinese diplomats. We've seen it in Canada, with former Chinese ambassador Lu Shaye criticizing Prime Minister Trudeau and Ms. Freeland when she was Minister of Foreign Affairs. It's a much more aggressive type of diplomacy.

As for Chen Xueming's letter published in *La Presse*, an excellent response was prepared today and it contradicts the claims in the letter. Mr. Xueming's letter is full of falsehoods, of course. No real consultations on the law ever took place in Hong Kong. Opponents aren't allowed to express their points of view.

The unfortunate thing in all this is that it's happening in the United States, as well. The publication *China Daily* has taken out advertising supplements in *The Washington Post* and other major U.S. dailies. The Chinese are taking advantage of the freedom of speech that exists in our societies, something that would be impossible for our diplomats in China to do. They couldn't have an editorial or opinion piece published in a Chinese newspaper. Chinese diplomats are abusing the system in that regard.

• (1710)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Still on the topic of diplomacy, Great Britain has banned Huawei from participating in its 5G infrastructure. Do you think it will be possible to do the same here? Would such a decision have a diplomatic or other impact?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: The federal government is ultimately going to have to make a decision on that. On the weekend, *La Presse* editorialist Alexandre Sirois wrote a piece stating that Canada could follow in the footsteps of New Zealand, which, while not formally banning Huawei products outright, is individually barring companies from using Huawei equipment.

Regardless, the trust has been lost. My view on the subject has changed. A few years ago, I thought we could do business with Huawei. Now, however, given all we know about what goes on in China, we can't risk vulnerabilities in our infrastructure, so we shouldn't allow China to contribute to the development of our 5G technology here, in Canada.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Ms. Anderson, I'm going to use the little time I have left to ask you a question.

From everything the subcommittee has heard during its study, we've learned that a cultural genocide has occurred, not just a genocide. We already had the evidence. The Chinese government is adamant about assimilating the local populations, mainly, the Han and Uighur populations and other minority groups in Xinjiang.

Do you have a sense of what's happening with Uighur artists and culture in Xinjiang?

[English]

Dr. Elise Anderson: I thank you for that question.

Over the last few years, I have watched from afar as a number of musicians and other performing artists have been disappeared into various forms of extrajudicial and extra-legal detention. Some have gone to camps; some have gone to prison. One recently was reportedly sentenced to 15 years in a closed trial, for which there is absolutely no documentation anywhere. We're seeing musicians and the cultural elite disappear alongside all sorts of people from all walks of life in Uighur society.

I'm seeing a decrease in musical activity. That was the particular focus of my research, on music. Public concerts have gone down to basically zero. The professional ensembles don't perform anymore. There is not much left of a public cultural life. That is very alarming, because the previous cultural public life was a space and a forum for the survival of Uighur tradition and Uighur language and so forth. A lot of spaces are gone.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Ms. Khalid for five minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Could I split my time?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: This question is for anybody who wants to answer it. It may be for the ambassador, but it's for all who are comfortable answering it.

Before 2019, we were just hearing anecdotes. We know that Chinese papers were revealed in 2019. According to New York Times reporting and an independent consortium of journalists, those leaked government documents exposed a program.

Can you talk about that? Earlier it was anecdotal, but now we have concrete information from the centre showing that this program is in force.

• (1715)

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Let me start.

Yes, indeed, this was an important revelation, and in fact it's linked to what I was saying earlier: that there is no unanimity among Chinese people. A lot of Chinese intellectuals decry what's happening in Xinjiang and in Tibet.

I think that in this case, this was a very well-kept document with limited circulation. You must assume that it was someone in the Communist Party who decided to leak a copy. In a way, once you know that and after all the reports that have been produced, I think it's impossible to remain ambivalent on China.

Dr. Elise Anderson: If I could jump in and address that as well, I absolutely agree. I think it was remarkable that the leak came from within the Communist Party itself.

I also think it bears saying very clearly that so much of what we know about what is happening we know from government documents. Researchers are analyzing government data, analyzing government documents. We are analyzing records that are there on the Internet and being circulated on social media.

Every now and then we get.... There have been three very high-profile leaks. There was this one to The New York Times. Then, I believe in November of last year, we saw the China cables from the ICIJ, and then in February we had the Karakax document with the Karakax list.

There is ample evidence, and it comes from the mouths of Chinese government officials themselves.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

That's very substantial, because we oftentimes think it's anecdotal. It's not anecdotal. That's the point I'm trying to underscore here.

Dr. Elise Anderson: Agreed, yes.

The Chair: Ms. Khalid, do you have anything, or should I go to Ms. McPherson?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Do I have time?

The Chair: There's about a minute, but we'll have another round.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Okay, no. Go ahead.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. McPherson. After Ms. McPherson's five minutes, we'll have a final round with a question or two from each party and an opportunity for our witnesses. If something has not been asked that you want to bring forward, we'd ask that you share that in our next round during that time. Thank you.

Ms. McPherson, you have five minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few questions for Mr. Saint-Jacques.

Again, to all the panellists, thank you for your interventions. They've been very helpful.

Mr. Saint-Jacques, I was intrigued a bit when in your opening comments you talked about CIDA and our international development funding, which I believe ceased in 2013. You wouldn't be recommending that we reinstate any funding for civil society within that framework again, would you?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Thank you for the opportunity to expand, because I had a lot more to say than I could in the six minutes.

At the time, the situation was quite different. I think the Chinese government had not embarked on its campaign of assimilation, of destruction of the Uighur culture. In fact, there was support from the Chinese government to help Uighur women get into business to develop small trade.

Apart from CIDA's official programs, I should add that at the embassy we have the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, which can be used to support small projects. When I was ambassador, we would use these projects and sometimes give a grant of \$20,000 or \$50,000 to help people organize a co-operative or to fight discrimination based on gender. We got quite good results. We had a few projects in Xinjiang.

I must say that once the Chinese government changed the law on NGOs in China, preventing them from getting foreign funding, it became almost impossible to fund any of these projects. The Chinese government was very concerned that some of these projects would lead to social instability.

• (1720)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you for that answer.

To follow on that, you had spoken of the idea that many of the Muslim countries are not speaking out against this atrocity and that this silence is a bit of a problem.

One of the things we've also seen is some deep movement by China into sub-Saharan Africa. Obviously they have huge ambitions to continue to colonize and expand their influence within sub-Saharan Africa.

Is there an opportunity, or could there be an opportunity, to work with allies within countries in sub-Saharan Africa, to push that? Is that another avenue for us to develop allies to work to work with?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Yes, I would agree with that. In fact, let's remember that Canada used to have a very important presence in Africa. It's too bad that this has been substantially reduced over the last 10 years. We still have an important capital of goodwill. People remember all the good projects that were undertaken.

Let's remember also that in sub-Saharan Africa there are countries with a large Muslim population. In fact, there are initiatives that have been started. There's one that involves the U.S., Canada and Japan to create an international fund to compete with the fund proposed by China.

I would add also that the attitude of some African countries has started to change as a result of the way China managed the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that there were reports of African nationals being badly treated, especially in Guangzhou in southern China.

We should pay attention to what China is doing in Africa, because again, they are forcing these countries to support their positions. That's an area where we should invest a little more to offer more choices to these countries.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm a big believer in increased overseas development assistance and I can only imagine that would put us on a better footing to do push-back on some of this movement with the CCP.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go into our final round. As I mentioned earlier, each party will have an opportunity to ask a question, maybe two. At the end of the questions from all the members from the different parties, the witnesses will have an opportunity to give some parting remarks for the last 30 seconds or minute.

With that, we're going to go to Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair.

I have a small question, and I believe Ms. Vandenbeld also has a question.

Monsieur Saint-Jacques, in your remarks you spoke a little bit about the history of terrorism within China in 2013 and 2014, which led to increased surveillance on the Muslim community within China, especially within Xinjiang province.

Can you expand on that for us a little bit? My understanding—and please, I would hope for clarification if I am incorrect—is that the surveillance was going on before these incidents had occurred as well.

Could you please comment on that? Thank you.

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: You're right. In fact, there was increased surveillance. What happened after.... There were four attacks that took place.

Of course the genesis of all of this was the very important riot that took place in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in 2009. After that, in 2013 and 2014—I was in China at the time—there was the first attack on Tiananmen Square in October in Beijing, and then a very gruesome attack, using knives, at the Kunming train station on March 1, 2014. Then there was an explosion at the Urumqi train station, and then finally a suicide car attack in an open market in Urumqi on May 22, 2014.

I had a discussion with Chinese officials in the Communist Party of China after those events to tell them that the policy they were following was the reason they were generating those attacks and that in fact they had to change the attitude. I recall saying to people in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Look at the example of Canada. Here I am, a French Canadian, as ambassador in one of the most important countries in the world. Can you point out to me a Uighur ambassador that you have anywhere around the world, or a Tibetan who occupies the function of ambassador?”

I said, “You have to give better opportunities to your people while letting them protect their culture.” I said, “There is a sense of despair for what you are doing. You are creating for yourself a lot of resentment, and this will come back to haunt you.”

Of course this led to very difficult conversations, but they were not in the mood to follow any advice.

• (1725)

The Chair: We turn to Mr. Genuis for a question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have one observation and two questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Ambassador Saint-Jacques' point about the forceful response of African leaders to the racism directed at African nationals during the COVID situation, especially in southern China, provides a powerful example that even countries that are potentially very vulnerable to Chinese efforts of colonialism were able to stand up and push back, and it had a real impact. I think that's a model for us to follow.

My first question is for Dr. Anderson, again on the issue of colonialism.

You spoke about colonialism, and we see those colonial efforts inside the territory of the PRC as well as beyond it. It seems to me that it's important for other countries to, at a minimum, refuse to be partners in that colonialism. However, we see many nations, including Canada, that are members of, for instance, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is part of the broader belt and road initiative.

I wonder if you can speak to the AIIB, what you think about countries being members of it, and the degree to which maybe that provides the appearance of legitimacy for the belt and road initiative.

Dr. Elise Anderson: That is a big, thorny, and of course very important question.

For me and for my organization, it fundamentally comes back to this issue: When are we, collectively, globally, going to actually act on the values that we say we hold? When are we going to prioritize human rights, not even necessarily over economic gain, but at least to the same extent?

So many of us pay lip service to those values, and so many of us pay lip service to human rights, and meanwhile we are not actually practising those values in the way that our country makes policies and in the way that we interact with countries like China. I do understand there are a number of countries and a number of governments that are in a tough bind and that see they have things to gain from China, but my question is, at what expense?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I guess one of the arguments that we've heard back from the government about membership in the AIIB is, "Well, it's better to have a Canadian voice at the table." We represent less than 1% of the voting shares of this neo-colonial vehicle. It seems to me that having a voice at the table in a so-called development bank whose modus operandi is spreading Chinese state colonialism misses the point entirely of what the objective of that entity is. I would love to hear your response on that.

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Dr. Elise Anderson: Right, and if you have a voice but you never actually say anything, or you have a voice but you only nod your head in agreement with what's happening, then what good is that voice?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

If I have a brief minute, I'd like to ask her about organ harvesting—

The Chair: We'll move now to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm going to turn to you, for the last time, Mr. Saint-Jacques, so thank you very much for being here today and contributing to the subcommittee's work. I still have a question for you.

Earlier, you brought up New Zealand's approach. You're the only witness to have mentioned it so far. Could you tell us a bit more about what New Zealand is doing exactly?

• (1730)

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: New Zealand has never formally stated that it was banning Huawei's involvement in building the infrastructure. However, when New Zealand companies request permission to use Huawei's products, that permission is denied. What that means is that, without ever stating publicly that Huawei is not allowed to participate in building its infrastructure, New Zealand is, in practice, following that policy.

I would also say, more broadly speaking, that we have a lot to learn from countries such as New Zealand and Australia when it comes to interference and intimidation. Australia has passed four laws to prevent interference in domestic matters. I think we should look to Australia as a model so that we can update our own legislation.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Are you saying that Australia and New Zealand handle things differently in cases involving victims or activists who fled and are now refugees but may be subject to Chinese attacks or surveillance?

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: Yes, actually. Australia passed a law in an effort to eliminate the potential for interference. It has experienced interference in its political system.

One of the things it did was ban all foreign donations. It requires anyone working for foreign powers, including former ministers and high-ranking officials, as well as ambassadors, to report their activities.

Australia also tightened up the rules governing intimidation of Australians of Uighur or Tibetan descent or refugees. It prosecutes the individuals responsible for such acts of intimidation.

The message we have to send China is that there is zero tolerance for intimidation.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: We will go to Ms. McPherson for the final question. Then the witnesses will each have an opportunity for a minute or so to conclude, if we've missed something.

Ms. Heather McPherson: As the representative for the New Democratic Party, I have the privilege of always being the last to address our witnesses. I wanted to give you all some time to summarize or follow up if there were some points that you weren't able to bring up earlier. I thought maybe what I would do is frame it a little bit.

Is there is something more that you think we should be doing, that the parliamentarians in Canada should be doing, that this committee should be doing more of? Is there something that we need to be doing more at the multilateral level? Finally, is there something that we need to be doing more to support those people within China, those internal forces that we can use to push back?

I'll open it up to all three of you to have your comments, if that's all right with you.

I really did love that line, Dr. Anderson, about "if you have a voice but don't say anything". Maybe we could start with you.

Dr. Elise Anderson: I'm trying to gather my thoughts here. I wanted to jump in at several points, but I didn't really get the chance.

On multilateral action, my organization has been watching and has been happy to see a little bit of movement, a little bit of action in that regard. On June 26, more than 50 UN experts issued a statement denouncing China's human rights record, notably the treatment of Uighurs and Tibetans, as well as the deteriorating situation in Hong Kong.

On June 29, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, a group of parliamentarians from 15 countries, called for a resolution to be tabled at the UN specifically about the situation in the Uighur region. I would urge Canadian lawmakers to use your voices to be part of those kinds of statements that are actually happening. There is some multilateral movement and multilateral action.

I also mentioned some things in my very quick rundown of policy recommendations that I haven't had a chance to mention yet. There are things Canada can do to focus on refugee admissions for Uighurs who are stateless. There's a crisis of Uighur statelessness in the Uighur diaspora around the world. If Canada could offer safe haven to those refugees, that would be one really positive step that Canada could take. That would also send a signal to China. That would be a form of using the Canadian voice. Canada should deter and punish harassment of Uighur Canadians who are living inside and outside of its borders.

I know I've spoken for a while, so I will turn the floor over to one of my fellow panellists. Thank you.

• (1735)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Saint-Jacques, you're the next person on my screen.

Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques: I know that it's difficult on the international scene, but again, as we've heard from Dr. Anderson, there's work that has been started. I was very pleased to see this Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China. We have to multiply this type of alliance. It will require a lot of work, a lot of effort, but I think we have no other choice; otherwise, we will lose our values.

Domestically, there are a number of things that we could do to limit cases of interference. For instance, when someone from a Chinese consulate intervenes with a university to ask them to cancel a discussion on what's happening in Xinjiang or Hong Kong, or if there is harassment of Uighurs living in Canada as refugees or of Canadians of Uighur origin, we should look at our laws to see what can be done to prevent that.

I agree also that we have to show some flexibility to admit more refugees to Canada. Also I think we should look at the supply chain and at what can be done to make sure that products made with forced labour don't end up in Canada. I think there are a number of things we can look at to send a message that we won't tolerate such behaviour on the part of China.

Thank you.

Ms. Amy Lehr: I'll be brief. I just want to second what Elise said about refugees.

One of the challenges for us is when we're looking for people to talk to. We have all these government documents that are the blueprints, but to me it was important to find humans who could tell us if those policies were actually being implemented. We did find some, but it's very hard to find Uighurs who will talk to you about their experiences, because they're so insecure. They don't have safety. They're refugees, and they don't have status where they are. I think that's a really vital element. I know that Canada in particular has a long history of accepting refugees, so I just want to second that recommendation.

Another thing that might be helpful would be if an international organization—and this would be hard to create—was to research what's happening in Xinjiang and issue an opinion from a legal perspective. It is my understanding that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the past has done studies when it wasn't permitted access to a region. I don't think it's entirely impossible to accomplish that, although it would obviously take the right political will. That might be somewhere Canada could help.

I think I've already touched on the questions of export controls and sanctions, etc.

Last, in a very big-picture way, continuing really aggressive efforts to support anti-corruption work around the world would be important in the long run when, again, we talk about belt and road and so forth. That is seen as feeding corruption globally, and if you're able to counter the corruption involved, it might not be so attractive to some leaders.

I'll close there. Thank you so much for having me here today.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we move in camera, as chair and on behalf of all of the members of committee, as well as the clerk, analysts, our interpreters, staff, technicians and everybody who has made the last two days happen, we can't thank our witnesses enough. You are tremendous experts and educators, advocates and academics. We've heard many personal stories here. Over these last two days, we have had thorough and compelling testimony that will help inform the work that we need to do.

We cannot thank you enough. On behalf of this subcommittee of foreign affairs, thank you so much.

The meeting is suspended.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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