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Special Committee on Canada-China Relations

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• (1210)

[English]

The Chair (The Honourable Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you're ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Interpretation for this video conference will work very much like in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of the floor, English or French. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly so that the interpreters are able to do their work. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute, please.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses. We have with us, Ms. Angela Gui, daughter of Gui Minhai, appearing as an individual, as well as Mr. Nathan Law, a Hong Kong activist and former legislator.

Thank you both very much for appearing today.

Ms. Gui, could we please start with your opening remarks? You have five minutes, and then we'll go to Mr. Law.

Ms. Angela Gui (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I am grateful for this committee's concern for the situation in Hong Kong, and I feel honoured to be invited to give evidence here today. I'm the daughter of Swedish national Gui Minhai, one of five Hong Kong-based booksellers who were abducted and detained in mainland China in late 2015. In the five years since my father was kidnapped while on holiday in Thailand, I have worked to urge governments to take more decisive action in demanding his release and to prevent similar extraterritorial abductions from happening in the future.

My father has been kidnapped by Chinese government agents three times. He is currently serving a ten-year prison sentence. After being taken into custody on the Chinese mainland, he was held incommunicado with no access to legal assistance. He was forced to refuse contact with Swedish consular officials, effectively bypassing the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and he was also forced to confess to crimes on Chinese television.

In October 2017, he disappeared again for six days after Chinese authorities claimed that he had been released. He resurfaced in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, under a type of residential surveillance in which he was allowed to communicate with me but was heavily monitored and not allowed to leave China. In our conversations, it also became clear that he had been subjected to torture.

My father was kidnapped again in January 2018, this time while travelling on a train with Swedish diplomats. Since then, he has again been held incommunicado. In February this year, he was sentenced in secret to 10 years in prison for illegally providing intelligence overseas. It has not been explained what specific acts this refers to. Chinese authorities further claim that my father has renounced his Swedish citizenship and applied to have his Chinese citizenship reinstated. As such, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been refused information even on his health status. I have not spoken to him since early 2018 and have no way of knowing if he is still alive.

My father's case is increasingly described as a precursor to China's repression of freedoms in Hong Kong through its recent national security law. Though in violation of Hong Kong's own Basic Law, as well as international law, this legislation is the Chinese government's way of ensuring that what happened to my father can now legally be done to anyone in Hong Kong.

Article 38 of the law indicates that it is intended to extend beyond the territory of Hong Kong to apply to anyone, anywhere. The national security law has institutionalized China's extraterritorial abduction of political dissidents. This suggests to me that while the efforts of countries like Canada and Sweden to respond to Beijing's human rights violations have been important, they sadly have not been enough.

Canada is home to a large Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese community, and I wonder how many of these people feel forced, like I do, to take extra security precautions daily in order to protect themselves from Chinese government harassment.

To honour its commitment to human rights then, Canada should make sure that its citizens and residents can safely express their opinions on China without having to fear harassment, intimidation or abduction. This is especially important, as Hong Kong activists are relocating to Canada for fear of their safety. Canada should also urgently move to protect Canadian citizens in Hong Kong whose health and safety was threatened by the Chinese ambassador last week. As we have seen in my father's case, China now claims the authority to unilaterally change foreign citizens' nationality, completely undermining the protection that foreign citizenship used to provide.

In taking these steps, Canada will set an important standard for other countries to follow and provide a basis for increased trans-national co-operation in holding Beijing accountable. To prevent what happened to my father from becoming the norm, the international community must act more swiftly and with more coordination than it hitherto has.

I therefore also want to call on Canada to work with Sweden and other countries by clearly and publicly demanding Beijing's adherence to international law by stating their refusal to co-operate with extraterritorial application of the national security law, as well as by demanding my father's release. Since condemnations have not been effective in the past, it is of paramount importance that demands also articulate consequences. I understand that reconsidering the relationship to China is not a decision to be taken lightly. However as extraterritorial abductions of political dissidents have become normalized, it ought to be a price that we are willing to pay.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would welcome any questions that you may have.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Law.

Mr. Nathan Law (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Chairman Regan.

It is my honour to be able to testify in front of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

As we all are aware, the Hong Kong we used to know is gone now. After a year of protests and a dreadful response from the authority, the polarity of the Hong Kong government has dropped to a historical low, and the confidence of the Hong Kong people in the one country, two systems ruling framework has basically vanished.

While the situation looks grim for Hong Kong, the Beijing authority has made it worse by circumventing all of our consultation and legislative processes to impose the notorious national security law, which was, to us, a de facto final nail in the coffin of the one country, two systems—

The Chair: Mr. Law, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

I'm being asked if you could hold your microphone a little closer to your mouth because the interpreters are having difficulty.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Nathan Law: Okay. Thank you so much.

Is it better now?

The Chair: I think that's much better. Thank you.

Mr. Nathan Law: Thank you so much.

With the draconian national security law, Beijing has the arbitrary power to detain, arrest and prosecute any political activists or dissidents they don't like. Carrie Lam says that the law is only intended to target violent protesters. That is a blatant lie. The sole purpose of the law is to quash our freedom of expression, any desires for political change and the right to protest. It has created widespread psychological terror and fear across the city.

Up to now, over 30 people have been arrested under the law. Indeed, the international media has covered the arrest of my dearest friend, fellow activist Agnes Chow, and the democratic veteran Jimmy Lai, who runs a pro-democracy news outlet in Hong Kong. High-profile activists like them were arrested as retaliation for the sanctioning by the U.S. government aimed at 11 Hong Kong and China officials who are responsible for the human rights violations in Hong Kong.

Arrests, however, are not limited to those with high profiles. Ordinary youngsters have also been arrested simply for possessing flags or stickers with protest slogans during arbitrary stop and searches in the city. These cases demonstrate the use of the law to terrorize and deprive the Hong Kong people at all levels of the most fundamental rights, and as a legal weapon for the Beijing government.

Because of these examples and the abusing of such a vaguely defined law, a sense of fear and white terror has permeated our entire society. Some of my friends are actively disengaging from political life and deleting posts on Facebook due to their fear of being prosecuted under the national security law. Academics are self-censoring and eliminating research topics that may be considered as crossing the red line. Reporters are worried that they are no longer able to cover certain sensitive topics.

This does not stop at Hong Kong. Recent reports have also indicated signs of academics and students in western academic institutions engaging in self-censorship, either for fear of danger when they visit Hong Kong or China, or due to strong funding ties to CCP-linked donors. Hong Kong is simply the first domino of the free world that has been knocked over by an impending avalanche of autocratic influence.

As one of the most respected democracies in the world, Canada has always been a place that Hong Kong people interact with and treasure. When Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997, a wave of Hong Kongers came to Canada in search of a safe home that shared our love for liberty, humanity and democracy. As the government crackdown intensified with the national security law, the Hong Kong people were grateful for the swift responses by the Canadian government to safeguard our freedoms, including halting the export of military-use goods and the extradition treaty with Hong Kong. Your young talent scheme also came as a lifeline for the people who face imminent dangers of political persecution at home, are in desperate need of protection, and are looking for a new place to call home.

We need to stop fantasizing that the Chinese Communist Party will become a strategic partner with liberal democracies. History proves that they only abuse the openness of our system and erode it by whatever means they can imagine. The democracies need to join hands and work together to safeguard liberal values and stop China from spreading its ideology and control over other regions.

Therefore, I would like to recommend the following policy directions to curb the influence of the Chinese authoritarianism. For the short-term tactics, Magnitsky sanctions against human rights abusers, particularly those in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang, should be in place. Furthermore, banning Huawei from participation in 5G, just like other countries have done, and developing a coherent asylum and refugee policy for Hong Kongers fleeing persecution are much needed.

• (1220)

In the medium to long-term, we should be engaging with like-minded allies throughout the world to develop a strategy to push back against China's human rights abuses, hostage diplomacy and coercive trade practices; develop closer economic, political and security ties with Taiwan; and introduce legislation to combat foreign agents of influence in Canada, particularly targeting the United Front's activities, which is also crucial to do.

We hope that the democratic communities around the world can stand together and protect our shared democratic values.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Law.

We'll go to our round of questions.

First we have, from the Conservative Party, Mr. Garnett Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you have six minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for your engagement, your courage, and your presence with us here today.

Ms. Gui, I'll start with you. Your family situation highlights two key aspects of China's emerging kidnapping and hostage diplomacy: the the denial of citizenship, and the real risk of abduction from third countries.

For me, this brings back the case of Huseyin Celil that we've talked about in this committee before. He is a Canadian citizen

whose Canadian citizenship has been denied by China and others. He has not, therefore, been able to have consular access while in prison. He was also abducted from Uzbekistan, a third country.

Could you speak more to these elements? Specifically, should we be concerned that Canadian citizens detained in China, or currently in Hong Kong, could be forced to renounce their citizenship, and how concerned should we be about Canadian citizens being abducted from third countries? How should we respond to protect our citizens who may be vulnerable in third countries?

Ms. Angela Gui: Those are all very pertinent questions, and I'm happy to answer them.

Yes, one should definitely be concerned about the risk of Canadian citizens being abducted in third countries, and also having their citizenship denied and potentially changed, as in the case of my father. What happened to my father sets a very worrying precedent which, to my knowledge, we haven't seen repeated yet, but it's imperative that nations, such as Canada and other like-minded nations, speak up in public, and very clearly delineate that this is not something that we accept. These nations must also formulate very clear consequences if this were to happen again.

Mr. Law made some really good points as to what specific measures could be taken. Something that one could do in the short term to protect Canadian citizens, who may be planning to travel to an area where there is significant Chinese influence—something like this might happen in Thailand, as in the case of my father—is to make sure that Chinese technology is not adopted beyond the point that it already has been in Canada.

As we're all aware, it has been known to spy on people, and especially people in vulnerable positions. I am pretty sure, for example, that one of the reasons my father was abducted in the way he was was that Chinese authorities were able to keep track of his habits, movements and plans.

• (1225)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Let me ask you another question.

It's interesting that you're here before us advocating a strong approach, a strong response, to the threat posed by the People's Republic of China in a way that protects us and our citizens. There's been a bit of a debate in Canada in response to our own situation of hostage diplomacy, some advocating a sort of concessional approach, to the point that in response to hostage-taking, we would make concessions in the context of Meng Wanzhou, for example, in order to elicit good behaviour.

Meanwhile, you're taking the approach that we need to respond with strength in a way that's going to protect other people. I'm inclined to agree with you that it's the right approach.

Could you speak directly to those people in Canada who maybe are personally affected by the situation of hostage diplomacy, for whom these things are very raw and very close? Could you tell them why you have taken this type of approach rather than recommending the concessional approach?

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you. That's an important question.

I think that there are multiple layers to your question. There's a sense in which my decision to be here and advocate as I am is a personal decision that I think goes to multiple levels, which is why I'm talking about it.

I don't believe that making concessions is ever going to encourage the good behaviour that some people might be expecting. I have family members who have chosen, or perhaps not really chosen.... They certainly felt they didn't have a choice, and when they were contacted after my father was abducted and asked to remain silent, they chose to do so. Though I can't divulge any sort of particular details about what happened, I can say that they are in a much worse situation today than I am. I think this goes to a larger level as well, in the sense that China has historically never shown that it listens to soft encouragements. As Nathan Law mentioned in his speech just now, many large world economies were hoping for a long time that China would be encouraged to open up.

The Chair: Ms. Gui, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but Mr. Genuis' time is up. I'm going to have to go on to the next member, but I hope you'll have more opportunity to expand on your thoughts.

We have next Mr. Peter Fragiskatos for six minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I'll put the question to Mr. Law first, but I'd also like Ms. Gui to comment on it. It concerns this idea that countries, Liberal democracies to be specific, ought to work in concert, finding ways to sort out their relations with China. Countries can't—well they can, I suppose—act on their own in that regard, but I think an emerging opinion suggests that it's much better for countries to come together in that.

It's all well and good to suggest that, though. I'd love to hear from both of you, since you have been working on these issues for so long and are quite invested in them. How can countries best do that in terms of the issues? Which issues should they focus on, and how can they best be heard, in your view?

Again, this it to Mr. Law to begin with, and Ms. Gui, for her to follow up too.

• (1230)

Mr. Nathan Law: Thank you so much for your question.

I think, first of all, that we need to deal with consensus. Consensus-building is the most important way to push for political changes.

I studied at Yale last year, and it was a period of time when Hong Kong was having a massive movement. Headlines were all over Hong Kong, and we saw a process of consensus-building across the political aisles.

The Chair: Mr. Law, I'm sorry to interrupt. I'll have to remind you to hold that microphone closer, if you don't mind, sir.

Mr. Nathan Law: I'm sorry about that.

Last year we saw the consensus-building process in the U.S. across political aisles, which made the Hong Kong issue one of the very few topics that both parties could agree on and then process in a traumatic space. I've been doing international advocacy work but

mainly focusing on Europe, and I think that kind of consensus-building process has been ongoing in Europe for at least the past couple of months. If we are going to work together as liberal democracies, then we have to really consolidate our China policy, and definitely see China as very aggressively expansionist power, and adopt measures such as building up policies on Huawei and state enterprises from China, and also, for example, on really imminent issues like boycotting the Winter Olympics. We could send a really clear signal that we're not going to follow the old path of engagement and appeasement policy, but are going to be very assertive and proactive as countries, which—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Law, I'm sorry. Could you just repeat that point? I wonder if the problem is on my end.

I heard you say “boycotting”, but I didn't hear you complete the phrasing there.

Mr. Nathan Law: Sorry about that.

I was talking about boycotting the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics in order to create a more consequence-based relationship with them, rather than just letting them do whatever they want. I think that building up alliances with the other liberal democracies and creating a policy side could definitely be helpful to constrain the authoritarian expansion.

The Chair: Ms. Gui.

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you.

I very much second what has been said. I think it's very important, too, that strategic alliances be formed between like-minded liberal democracies. For this to be realistic, in that it will have an effect, much more effort needs to be put into organizing high-level officials from each interested country to come together and actively sit down and discuss what other policies we want to enact together to stop Chinese influence in the way it has been developing.

One major problem I've seen is that countries have been very keen to sign joint letters, which is all fine and well. I believe it's a positive thing to see the intention from many countries, but as we've seen in the past, such declarations of intent haven't really achieved anything yet. I wish that liberal democracies could use the momentum to discuss in more realistic and constructive terms what we can agree we will actually do together and in coordination.

The Chair: You have 45 seconds, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much. I think both of you have put your finger on particular pressure points that would be noticed by the Chinese state and by this leadership in particular.

I asked the question simply because there are so many different possibilities for the alliance of liberal democracies to focus on when it forms around this issue—and I hope it will. We need very specific points to suggest and to think about, certainly in relation to the advice that we provide our own government here in Canada.

I'll leave it there. Thank you very much for all the work that you're doing to advocate for human rights.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Fragiskatos.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, too, would like to begin by thanking Ms. Gui and Mr. Law for their extremely enlightening comments on the work of this committee. I commend them for having the courage to agree to be with us despite the legitimate fears they may have as a result of what happened to them and their loved ones. I thank them very much and congratulate them.

One of the concerns we've had from the beginning has been that some witnesses might be afraid to come before this committee. This leads us to reflect on the modus operandi of the People's Republic of China outside its borders.

Ms. Gui and a number of her colleagues were abducted either in Hong Kong, in contravention of Hong Kong's autonomy in matters of security, or elsewhere in the world. In the case of Ms. Gui, it was in Thailand.

There are three questions that arise here.

First, does the People's Republic of China have a number of agents abroad? I imagine this is a question that will be of great interest to our colleague Mr. Paul-Hus, who wants us to quickly address the issue of security and the People's Republic of China's influence on Canadian territory. Does the People's Republic of China have agents abroad to intimidate or even make arrests?

Second, does this require the complicity of the states on whose territory the abductions take place? I am thinking of Thailand, for example. Is there any indication that Thailand may have been complicit in the abduction of Ms. Gui on its territory?

Third, countries are powerless to enforce consular provisions when their own nationals are incarcerated by China. This was very apparent in the case of a Canadian citizen with dual citizenship, and was discussed at length in this committee. The People's Republic of China does not recognize the Canadian citizenship of this national. In the case of Ms. Gui, China does not recognize Swedish citizenship. I think there are a number of leads as to what states need to do to try not to become isolated in facing China.

Returning to China's modus operandi for acting abroad, what would you have to say to enlighten us in our work, Ms. Gui and Mr. Law?

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Gui, please proceed.

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you.

I think those are all excellent questions and points. I can start by addressing the point about my father's abduction from Thailand in 2015. Yes, I personally believe, although it hasn't been conclusively shown, that Thai authorities were complicit in the abduction of my father. For example, he left his passport behind when he was kidnapped and had to have it renewed during the period in which he was in house arrest in 2017. To my knowledge, the only thing Thai authorities said about this incident was that they had no record of him ever leaving Thailand. Thai authorities have not seemed will-

ing to assist in any investigation of what happened to my father, which is something that concerns me greatly.

On the other point, about Canadian dual nationals potentially being subject to the same treatment as my father, I will also just emphasize that my father is in fact solely a Swedish national. He does not have Chinese citizenship. He went through the process of renouncing it actively, which is quite a long and arduous process. This didn't seem to matter. I think it may have quite harrowing implications for Canadian citizens as well.

• (1240)

The Chair: Mr. Law, you have one minute.

Mr. Nathan Law: Thank you.

Yes, definitely; I think it's especially for activists like me. I have been engaging in political activism for around six years, and I've been avoiding going to places where their relationship with China is quite friendly. Thailand is one of the places. For me, it's clear that among these authoritarian regimes there's a high possibility of collusion or co-operation with each other. Activist like us have to be very careful.

Yes, indeed, there's a reason why in this hearing and other hearings there are no activists from Hong Kong who are based in Hong Kong, still physically in Hong Kong, who are willing to participate. The reason is that it would draw many repercussions for them.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

We now have Mr. Harris for six minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for coming forward today. I want to congratulate and commend you both for the courage you've shown in the face of a very strong situation, where the government is very powerful and exercises that power in strong ways—against your father in particular, Ms. Gui, and against you personally, Mr. Law.

Mr. Law, you left, of course, the day before the national security law was imposed. You are now living in the U.K. We heard from time to time that the U.K. was expected to impose what are often referred to as the Magnitsky sanctions. I think after a long debate one way and the other, they finally adopted this similar type of legislation that other countries have, although not very many, of course.

What's the expectation of what the U.K. might do in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Nathan Law: Yes, indeed under the Magnitsky act, we are all hoping that these sanctions do apply to the Chinese officials. For now it isn't the case. We're trying to put forward that enactment in order to really hold these Chinese officials accountable. I believe a similar sanctions mechanism will possibly be in place by the EU in the future. I hope it will also apply to Chinese officials with regard to the Uighur concentration camps and other human rights violations happening in China.

In terms of what's upcoming in the future, the U.K. government has been sorting out the BN(O) scheme, which allows millions of Hong Kong people to come to the U.K. and get citizenship in the long term. This is seen as a really beneficial scheme for the Hong Kong people. For me, I'm actively interacting with the government to expand that to the young people who are most in need. There are other mechanisms, such as high scrutiny of Chinese enterprises in the U.K. and other policies that really curb the influence of the Chinese Communist Party overseas. I think these are directions in which the U.K. government has been moving, and I hope the other European countries can also shift in that direction.

Mr. Jack Harris: Perhaps I should be more specific, because obviously you expressed the hope that this would happen. The U.K. has had a policy change. They're dealing with people who were already passport holders in the U.K. and are therefore already able to come to the U.K. under existing passports. They made some policy changes, which, I would venture to suggest, are fairly easy to do.

You are expressing the hope that they impose sanctions. They've had plenty of time to do that. I'm just wondering if you have any realistic expectation that the U.K. government will actually do that, because I haven't heard anything of late indicating that they are doing more than what they've announced already.

Now, they have made some suggestions that they would make it easier for students who come to the U.K. to study to stay longer, which is again a policy change that is very positive.

I'm interested in this question of sanctions, because there are only seven or eight countries that have this type of legislation, and maybe more will come. I'm looking to what mechanisms might be used when you talk about.... We talk in Canada about an alliance of countries who are seeking to make it difficult for the authorities who violate human rights and who act in the ways we're talking about that we would like to influence.

What mechanisms are available in addition to the Magnitsky-type sanctions, which we haven't yet seen from other countries other than the U.S.?

• (1245)

Mr. Nathan Law: Thank you once again for your question.

I think the foreign minister has also talked about it, and they have considered it, and they have not said that it is impossible. For me, a continual dialogue with them is crucial, and I hope this could be done in the future for the second or third round of the Magnitsky act sanctions.

For me it is important that we work together, not only on the sanction mechanism.... For example, if all the liberal democracies decide to act in this way, when we have a trade agreement with

China, then it is impossible for China to have leeway to try to mingle and to do business with one and not the other to circumvent this kind of united effort by all of the liberal democracies.

The problem is that you don't have a concrete mechanism, just as Ms. Gui said. The leaders could sit together and work out a plan to hold China accountable. For me the problem is not what policies we could follow, but the intention and the mechanism that all these countries could work together.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Law and Mr. Harris.

Now we are on to the second round.

Mr. Chong, you have five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Gui, thank you for taking the time to tell your heartbreaking story about Hong Kong. It sent chills up my spine.

My late father was a Hong Konger who went to high school there, grew up there and was born there. He began his studies at university in mainland southern China, and it was just over 70 years ago, as the communists began their march south in 1948, that he fled on one of the last trains back to Hong Kong.

Like your father, he never held Chinese citizenship but rather a British Hong Kong passport. He told us when we were kids that he'd never go back to mainland China for fear of being abducted, so your story sent chills up my spine, and I thank you for telling that.

Good afternoon, Mr. Law. Thank you for taking the time to appear. It's good to see you again, and I'm glad to see you're safe and well.

My first question is for Ms. Gui. Has the Swedish government done anything with respect to Thai authorities arresting your father, and have they done anything with respect to the People's Republic of China?

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you, also, for sharing your family's story.

This ties into the second question, I think, that I was asked as well, about potentially making concessions. My experience has been that Sweden has been hesitant in its response to China's violations of my father's human rights, but also in general. As we have seen, that has not been effective.

With regard to communications with Thailand, I do not have full insight into the bilateral communications, of course. I am aware that there were questions asked, but I think they weren't asked in public, which I had hoped they would be.

• (1250)

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

Has the European Union made any public statement about China's violation of the Vienna convention with respect to your father?

Ms. Angela Gui: There was a European Parliament resolution—there have been two, I believe. I don't think they mentioned the violation of the Vienna convention specifically. I may be wrong, but to the best of my recollection, I don't think so.

Hon. Michael Chong: Were these resolutions with respect to your father?

Ms. Angela Gui: Yes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Mr. Law, you were elected to the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. What impact has the absence of pro-democracy candidates had on the functioning of LegCo and on Hong Kongers' view of LegCo?

Mr. Nathan Law: After a series of disqualifications of the Cantonese running for the council and parliamentarians over the past number of years, I believe that the Hong Kong people already view the legislative council as merely a puppet council of the Chinese government because the Hong Kong people cannot enjoy the right of electing their representation fairly.

For me, yes indeed, its legitimacy is largely challenged and Hong Kong people believe less and less in the change in the system, and that is why protests broke out so massively last year because they stopped believing in participating in the system that had made a concrete change.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

I remember sitting around the cabinet table in 2006 when we had to evacuate thousands of Canadians from the conflict in Lebanon. I ask this question in the context of the 300,000 Canadians living in Hong Kong. In your estimation, at what point do we see a tipping point where there could be a mass exodus of Hong Kongers seeking to leave the special administrative region?

Mr. Nathan Law: I think for now at least it isn't likely to happen in the foreseeable future because Beijing still does not target massive numbers of people. But other than an exit plan, concrete help for those individuals in Hong Kong, Canadian Hong Kongers, is crucial so we should develop plans in that direction.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chong.

[Translation]

Mr. Dubourg, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I plan to share my time with my colleague Ms. Yip.

First, let me thank Ms. Gui and Mr. Law for being here. Like my colleagues, I really want to tell them that their courage is exceptional.

Ms. Gui, I would especially like to understand the influence of the Chinese government beyond its borders. I don't want to cause security problems for you, but can you tell us what measures you have taken, personally, to protect yourself? Also, what can the Canadian government do to assist you in this process?

[English]

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you.

This is something I have worried about daily for entire five years I have been doing this. Like Mr. Law, I don't travel to many places that I wish I could travel to but where China has influence. I have been subjected to many intimidation attempts here in the U.K., where I am based, but also in Sweden and Germany and other places. Mostly this has been in the form of intrusive [*Technical difficulty-Editor*] photography, but it's also happened through an attempted break-in. Early last year I was involved in an influence operation, in which I suspect Chinese agents were involved. The Swedish ambassador to Beijing at the time invited me to a meeting in Stockholm with two Chinese businessmen. I was in a hotel lounge for 72 hours and was made to feel that I couldn't leave and that I had to be quiet about my father's case or I would never get to see him again. That was what they said.

Of course, it's very hard in these circumstances to know how you can protect yourself. It's never a straightforward thing, unfortunately. I have to make sure I minimize the information I give out when I communicate. Even using encrypted apps I don't tell people about my whereabouts. I worry about communicating with friends who may have Huawei phones or routers. That's maybe the most concrete and short-term recommendation that I can make to that end. Other than studying and following Chinese influence and intimidation in Canada, I would also recommend that Canada try to limit the expansion of Chinese technology to help protect people in my situation.

• (1255)

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you so much, Ms. Gui. I know the time is flying, but I have just one minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Law, I know that you are one of the six people they are trying to arrest. I wonder how you are personally experiencing this situation in the United Kingdom.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Law: The simple answer is that I cannot go back to Hong Kong and I'm living a life of exile. From now on my life is committed to international advocacy work for the democratic movement of Hong Kong.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Dubourg.

We will now continue with Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to come back to the question that was asked by my colleague Mr. Dubourg, because it covers one of the aspects of the question that I asked earlier and which was not completely answered.

I know that the risks of kidnapping or extraterritorial arrest are greater in states closer to the Chinese communist regime. Would you say that there is still a risk of kidnapping in countries that are less close to the Chinese communist regime, such as Canada or the United Kingdom, or is it more likely that Chinese dissidents will simply be harassed?

The Chair: I believe the question is for Mr. Law and Ms. Gui.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Law: Thank you so much for the questions.

I always say that I'm completely safe. We understand how far-reaching the influence of the Chinese Communist Party could be, so I try to—

The Chair: Mr. Law, I'm sorry to interrupt again, but please hold your microphone.

Thank you.

Mr. Nathan Law: I'm sorry about that.

I then also say that I'm completely safe, and we all understand how extensive China's reach can be. For the past couple of months since I left Hong Kong, I have been living a discrete life and trying to keep a low profile, so I didn't really appear at events or do any public speaking.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Ms. Gui, is there anything else you would like to add?

[*English*]

Ms. Angela Gui: I'll be very brief.

What happened to my father—being abducted from Thailand—was unprecedented then. Based on that, I think it's reasonable to assume, given China's expansion of its repression of human rights, that abductions may happen in the future in countries like Canada or other western democracies, yes.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Bergeron.

Now we have Mr. Harris for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Gui, you just referred to a concern about potential abductions in Canada. When you talked about Thailand, you indicated that there was a complicity or potential complicity by the Thai government and a lack of protection from Sweden.

Given the concerns that have been raised by Canadians—and we will hear from some of them soon at our committee—about whether they ought to be afraid, what should the Government of Canada do to protect its citizens in potential situations like that? Do you have any suggestions?

I realize that you're not an expert in this field, but it makes me feel that there's a vulnerability there and that the government maybe should be doing something that it's not doing.

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you.

Yes, I am no expert in this field, but some thoughts do come to mind. The first one is this: Make sure that Canada's consulates and its embassy in China expand their capabilities to monitor human rights abuses, and also make sure that citizens can come to consulates or the embassy with their safety concerns.

I also think that...

Oh, no. I completely lost my train of thought. Would you mind repeating the question, please?

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, that's something that's important within Hong Kong or within China. I guess I'm asking the reverse of that.

You say that Thailand failed your father and Sweden failed your father. How can Canada make sure that people in its own country—citizens of Canada or Chinese citizens within Canada...? What should we make sure that we are doing to ensure that this doesn't happen on our soil?

Ms. Angela Gui: Thank you for the reminder. I'm sorry about that.

I think something that Canada can do—and which I'm hoping that more governments will also do—is issue a travel warning or travel advisory for travel to China.

I also realize that your question concerns abductions in Canada. I think that taking a stronger stance, in general, against China in public, and doing so through imposing targeted sanctions similar to the Magnitsky-style sanctions that we've seen other countries talk about adopting, could send the message to China that this is something that Canada will not accept.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gui.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Colleagues, we are now over our time. I want to thank our witnesses very much.

I know that we all appreciate your attendance today and have been affected by your testimony. Thank you so much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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