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Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. This is meeting number 13 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Wednesday, April 1, 2009. We are continuing our committee hearings on the situation in Sri Lanka, and we will have time this afternoon for committee business.

I apologize to our guests today. Question period went a little long, and then we had votes after question period. So my intent is to go past 4:30, and closer to 5 o'clock if our guests can stay a little longer. We would appreciate that. We will then have time for committee business after that.

Today we have a number of witnesses. First of all, Mr. Noor Nizam is appearing as an individual. Also, from McMaster University, we have Alexandre Sévigny, an associate professor in the department of communication studies and multimedia. Welcome. From the Sri Lanka United National Association of Canada, we have executive committee members Mr. Muttukumaru Chandrakumaran and Hasaka Ratnamalala. From the Tamil Catholic Mission in Montreal, we have Reverend Father Andrew Thavarajasingam.

Our committee provides time for each witness to make a short opening statement and then we'll go into the first round of questions. We should have time for two rounds of questions today. On days like this, I try to give everyone the opportunity to ask questions.

On a point of order, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Are we going to reserve 30 minutes for committee time today?

The Chair: Yes. It doesn't have to necessarily be the full 30 minutes, but we do have to discuss the Washington trip. I'm not certain. I don't think there are any motions to be brought forward today, although there may be. My intent is to allow our guests today over the hour, and then committee business for as long as it may take, with the plan of closing down at 5:30 p.m. for certain.

Anyway, welcome here. We will ask Mr. Sévigny if he will begin. And again, welcome.

Dr. Alexandre Sévigny (Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia, McMaster University): Thank you.

I'm a professor of communication studies and multimedia at McMaster University. I'd like to speak about communication today and communication as a tool for peace.

The vast majority of wars in today's world involve conflict within states. In the west, majority groups bemoan a loss of national identity, while minority nations press for devolution or for independence. Religious conflict once again looms large. At the heart of the resolution of these conflicts, quite often, is the need to develop effective critical awareness, as well as skills and training in communications and communication management.

Canada has had a founding and powerful voice in the world of communications, both as an academic discipline and as an industrial innovator. Consider the seminal musings of Harold Innis on the relationship between empire and communications and the bias of media. Consider also the works of Marshall McLuhan on the effects of electronic media on society, culture, and economics. Canadian corporate innovators such as Research In Motion have transformed our lives as global citizens through the BlackBerry device and analogous devices. In general, Canada's moderate and well-thought-out regulatory media and communications policies have kept our media and communications representatives thriving and innovative.

From the perspective of negotiating different points of view and multiple perspectives, Canada is also at the forefront. We have a very successful multicultural mosaic model, an open and free media, and a government that communicates its intentions and activities fairly transparently to its citizens.

Canada is uniquely positioned to deploy its expertise—academic, commercial, and not-for-profit—to help developing and war-torn countries, particularly those experiencing internal ethnic conflict. We can transfer the knowledge that we have about our Canadian model—getting along multiculturally and communicating effectively among ourselves and to the exterior.

So what do I think Canada can do for Sri Lanka? While media and a lack of communication can lead to violence, free and organized communication can be a solid step towards binding together a national identity and creating bridges between diverse communities within a nation. We propose that the Canadian government envision a pilot project whereby Canada would deploy Canadian communications expertise to accomplish three things.

One, we should link up institutions in Canada and Sri Lanka through academic faculty and student exchanges. We should encourage professional twinning—and it would be quite innovative—between professional communicators in Canada and Sri Lanka, while increasing collaboration between NGOs interested in communications as a tool for economic development and working toward peace.

Secondly, we could offer a Canadian communications course or set of modules that would highlight the tolerant Canadian model and the vigilant Canadian model for freedom of speech and communications through agreement with a leading educational institution in Sri Lanka, such as the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, or a course or set of modules on communication management through a leading school of management or commerce.

Third, we might offer a set of modules on various aspects of communications that could be made available to public servants, parliamentarians, non-governmental organization workers, and public relations professionals in Sri Lanka.

Right now you are probably wondering, why do this? This project would provide academics, politicians, and communications professionals with the analytical tools to examine problems of national, ethnic, and religious conflict in a communications context from a Canadian perspective, which is a perspective of tolerance, respect, and negotiation. It would present national, ethnic, and religious conflicts in a broader context, drawing on research in comparative politics, history, sociology, cultural and genetic anthropology, political theory, and international relations vis-à-vis Sri Lanka, its communities, and its international relations. Communications is an interdisciplinary field. It should also provide insight into the post-1980 literature on nationalism and ethnic conflict by yielding a wealth of real-world case studies covering every corner of the globe.

This project would develop the capacity to analyze political debates in a critical manner, while improving teamwork and both written and oral communication skills. It would create knowledge repositories to locate and analyze, for both qualitative and quantitative analysis, data on nationalism from printed and electronic sources on Sri Lanka. There would be a sense of what's available, what has been said by whom, and to what effect.

It should raise awareness to provide citizens and members in the political ethnic playing field with a good foundation from which to create positive resolutions concerning nationalism and ethno-religious conflict and the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka, with a special focus on the aftermath of the war.

• (1540)

In conclusion, Canada has been very good at delivering products to developing countries—media products that are very effective and

products that highlight distinctions among class divisions within countries and distinguish between groups that oppress and groups that are oppressed.

But Canada has not transferred expertise, because it is a difficult and challenging thing to do. Canadians are among the best communicators around. I think this is an incredible bridge possibility for Canadians to transfer that knowledge and expertise, rather than simply transferring products.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Sévigny.

We'll move on to Mr. Nizam.

Mr. Noor Nizam (As an Individual): Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Noor Nizam. I represent the Tamil-speaking minority community of Sri Lanka, the Muslims. I have to thank the team here and the honourable Paul Crête and David Sweet for giving me this opportunity.

To go straight to the question of international relations between Canada and Sri Lanka, there have been a lot of issues among the Canadian diaspora regarding the situation that is happening in Sri Lanka. There was a change after the militancy group of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was proscribed through Bill C-36. In recent times, this has since resulted in a somewhat unique but appreciated diplomatic relationship between Canada and Sri Lanka.

One of the main things I would like to emphasize here is that in the aftermath of the situation in Sri Lanka, as the whole world is watching, what are we as Canadians going to do to fill the vacuum that will be created, especially among the diaspora?

What interest will Canadians have in helping the Sri Lankan Muslim minority community, which is 1.7 million of the population, with 40% of the population living in the northeast? It was completely sidelined by the CFA and the peace process. The Muslims played a very important role in bringing forth the peace process in Sri Lanka nearly 18 years ago.

It's not the only concern of the Muslims. A concern of the Muslims has been the Tamils and the children. Child soldiers are a big issue. You'll note that 10 to 12 of the Security Council resolutions have never been effected by UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. If Canada is not alive to that, how are we going to help the 7,200 children who need assistance and who will come out of this war? Maybe some of them will die. What are we going to do? What is Canada's responsibility?

I'm also in the field of communication studies. I'm an educator at McMaster, but I'm making a personal representation. On this aspect, my colleagues and I are asking for the possibility of having a round table with the same method as applied to the Afghanistan round table, so that we can discuss the issue of child soldiers and bring back the child campaign that Sri Lanka had launched with the support of UNICEF.

Apart from that, we also have a very important issue on humanitarian aid and development assistance. You will see that I've brought a box to show you. This box is from Health Partners International.

Canada gave \$3 million to organizations. None of this money has reached the IDPs in Vavuniya. I spoke to CARE Canada yesterday. They reluctantly accepted and said they were sorry, but nothing was being done in Sri Lanka. They had given the money to Care International. The money was given by Canada on February 26, but not a single dollar has gone there.

The Sri Lankans, Muslims, Tamils, Sinhalese, and Burghers collected money. We all put money into a till. We collected money. We got \$30,000 worth of medicines from HPI, Health Partners International, as a donation. We paid for the logistics.

One of our volunteers will be flying soon. Air Canada gave us a free ticket. I have to thank the honourable David Sweet for helping us. SriLankan Airlines is carrying it for free.

This is the humanitarian aid that Canada has to give. You don't give \$3 million and forget it and then tell the world to look at what Canada did. What did they do?

I am a Canadian. As a Canadian, I'm asking Canada this. Why can't you give us more money to send there? Should we collect money to send humanitarian assistance to our kith and kin, our extended families, our own communities, the Tamil-speaking community, and the Tamil-speaking Muslim community? There's no difference among us. We are one people. We are one nation. I'm a Canadian.

● (1545)

Gentlemen of the committee, my appeal to you is this. Tell CIDA to stand on their own feet and not to play the old games or help the old club members. Look at projects like this. Do not use criteria that knock us out because we don't have three years of experience, we don't have audited reports. In emergency and disaster relief, you don't require all that. You stand on your feet and make decisions.

We are appealing to the Canadians. It is your money. Canada is known for giving. But your own MP here, Mr. Dan McTeague, has said how \$200 million given to the tsunami fund has still not been used. Red Cross, for example, and this is dated very recently: \$200 million for the tsunami still not accounted for. I have evidence here. If my statement is wrong, you can prosecute me.

There was \$3 million given to organizations, with \$500,000 given to CARE Canada. Not a single cent has gone, sir—not a single cent. There are 700 pregnant women suffering there without medicine. Children are suffering.

The Sri Lankan government may be doing what it can, but that's not our territory. We can't get into government territory. We can get into civil society territory. That is the territory where we can fight and work. We want you to consider these things positively.

And please, understand that the Muslim community also has suffered. We have suffered genocide. We were killed—174 people in a mosque in Kattankudi. In 1990 we were chased away—80,000 people.

I'm not blaming anyone here. I am blaming the conflict. I'm blaming the international community. International NGOs have been completely unfair in representing the facts.

I have evidence here to show that the international press and the media.... And I'm a media scientist. I write journalistic and investigative articles about terrorism. My articles are respected by the U.S., the British, and the French. But what I'm saying is that they don't follow the ethics and codes of journalism; they just write spontaneous articles, which has in fact created the problem between Canada and Sri Lanka.

What we're asking is that you give the opportunity for young people.... We have to do it. Sir, don't allow the next generation of Tamil young people here in Canada—Tamil-speaking Tamils and Muslims—to become a community filled with hatred. If you allow the gap to remain, this next generation will grow with hatred. That will create a much bigger conflict between the two countries. Let us help our kids here to understand, to accept the situation in the Sri Lanka, to help the kids there and work forward.

Thank you very much.

● (1550)

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

We'll move next to Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala.

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala (Executive Committee Member, Sri Lanka United National Association of Canada): Honourable chairman of the committee, members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all for giving us this opportunity to share our views on what's happening in Sri Lanka.

My name is Hasaka Ratnamalala. I'm a Sri Lankan Canadian. I practised as an attorney at law and was a journalist in Sri Lanka. During my time as a journalist, I had the privilege of travelling to every corner of the island of Sri Lanka. In fact, I was the first Sinhala journalist who managed to visit LTTE-controlled Jaffna in 1993.

During my first visit, I was able to interview LTTE leaders such as Anton Balasingham, Thamil Chelvam, and Aiyathurai Nadesan and was able to receive first-hand knowledge of the LTTE. My articles were published in a Sinhala language alternative newspaper called *Ravaya*.

I also belonged to a group of people, those who thought there was a possibility of peace in Sri Lanka if the Sri Lankan government would talk to the LTTE. I later understood from experience that it is not possible, because the LTTE would never compromise in their stand on the final solution to the conflict, which is, according to them, to have a separate state.

That is the only reason this conflict has lagged on so long. That is probably what the LTTE wants. In that case, peace talks or ceasefire became meaningless practices in the Sri Lankan context. In the Sri Lankan experience, a "ceasefire" with LTTE has had so many other meanings such as death, destruction, western conspiracy, western hypocrisy, new imperialism, rearming, regrouping and re-attacking—in other words, simply bombs, bombs, and more bombs.

Today, for the first time in the world, Sri Lankan security forces have shown the world that terrorism can be defeated by force. They have cornered the LTTE, the world's most ruthless terrorist organization, on a small piece of land close to 20 square kilometres. But the danger is that LTTE is holding several thousand civilians as a human shield. But very soon, the armed conflict will be over, and therefore what we have to concentrate on here is the situation after the conflict. The Sri Lankan government is already starting to look into a permanent political solution to the conflict.

As a first step, the Sri Lankan government has started to fully implement the 13th amendment to the constitution, and further devolvement to the provincial level is on the way through the APRC, or all-party round table conference. There is a huge debate on that matter going on in Sri Lanka. This is a positive sign. Unfortunately, those elements who support the LTTE agenda in the diaspora do not want that debate to take place in this diaspora.

In Sri Lanka all barriers that keep Tamils from thinking as Sri Lankans are coming down. The century-old British relic of showing ethnicity on a birth certificate has been removed. Tamil people did not get their chance to integrate into mainstream Sri Lankan society, mostly because Tamil political leaders kept Tamil society in that way for their petty political gains. With the end of LTTE, that barrier also ends. Tamil leaders who can work as Sri Lankans are coming forward today. I think we have to respect that.

Today, over 60% of the Tamil population is living in areas other than the north and east with the Sinhalese majority. That is the reality today.

Thank you very much.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Chandrakumaran.

Mr. Muttukumar Chandrakumaran (Sri Lanka United National Association of Canada): Thank you very much.

My name is Muttukumar Chandrakumaran. Unfortunately, I was introduced with the wrong association. I am the international director for the Rotary Club of Pickering. We do international projects.

I thank the members for the opportunity to review my thoughts on the situation in Sri Lanka and what Canada can do to implement permanent peace.

I am a democratic Tamil. I was born in Jaffna. I moved to Kandy, the capital for Sinhalese people. My family and my parents lived in harmony in Kandy. Then I moved to Colombo, where I grew up. I moved within all ethnic groups, and we had friendships. This harmony was disrupted by the power-greedy politicians. They were looking for power more than anything. This is the main reason this conflict is here.

I left Sri Lanka in 1978 after the communal trouble in 1977, in which I almost got killed. After so much suffering, Sri Lankans got their first peace in 1985, but the peace deal was signed only in 2002.

In that year, my family got their first chance to visit Sri Lanka after 22 years. When I had a chance to move around freely in Colombo and the southern part, I thought my teenage years had come back, because we were free to move. There was no fear among the Sinhalese or Tamils. We were free to move.

But there was a problem, because when we went to the LTTE area, they had been trained and had undergone certain group...*[Inaudible—Editor]. When I went into Thandikulam, which is the LTTE area, questions were asked. Why had I come? Who asked you to come? Where are you going to stay? These were the types of questions. Those kids didn't have proper education facilities, they didn't have any communication outside. This has to be broken down.*

If Canada wants to get involved in the peace process and achieve a peaceful solution, they should clean up their backyard first. I'm telling you this because, as Sri Lankan Tamil Canadians here, we are in a worse situation than in an LTTE-controlled area, but police can't do anything because there is no power. People can't even move or have anything.

When we called Honourable Bob Rae to have a first peace meeting in 2007, he was willing. The meeting was organized by three communities, Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslims—the first ever. We wanted to find solutions. He was called by this group. They said, don't go. They sent e-mails, and they even tried to stop the meeting. They came. They sent some people to disturb the meeting, but luckily for us, we had some security arranged earlier.

Even the Sri Lankan Tamils want to live in harmony, but this group has to be stopped. The Tamil children and youth in Vanni, Sri Lanka, have had their rights, family values, opportunities, education, and communication with the outside world taken out.

I have shown some pictures to you. Look at those children.

I did a program after the tsunami to educate the students in Vanni and Ampara, over 3,500 students. I asked our Canadian agency for some sort of help, and they said no. I had to use our own money, \$30,000, which we collected ourselves, and we did this. We are not getting any help from Canadian authorities to do anything at all. I don't know how we can approach this, how we can do anything.

The biggest problem we are facing in Canada is our younger generation. There has been a hatred created between the Tamil and Sinhalese youth because of this issue. If they're not going to stop these things, we are going to have a big problem here.

I have given a CD with some of the information. At least have a look at those CDs. Youths and kids are dressed in army uniforms and acting like freedom fighters or like...I can't say what name. What do you expect from them? That is going into their minds.

● (1600)

Even the RCMP is not able to stop these things. Nobody is, because the law in Canada says that it's freedom of speech. Where is that freedom of speech going to go? We are going to have more terrorism here than back home. The group here doesn't even want peace in Sri Lanka, because they can have a life of luxury when they're living here in Canada. Some of those people don't even work. They have four houses and luxury cars and are running around. What do they do?

One elderly lady who is 65 came to me and said, "Look, I go out in the early morning. At seven o'clock I get up, I take some food from my fridge, and I go to work. But these people sleep until ten o'clock, get dressed, put on a full suit, and say to give them money, otherwise I can't go home." These people are given money, and nobody can stop this, but where the money is going nobody knows.

Why can't Canada set up an account and tell all the Tamil people that Canada has set up an account here, we'll give them a tax credit, and we'll match the money? We can do a lot of work in that area and can change the situation in Sri Lanka.

I've given you a couple of CDs, and when you play them you can see how they are.... Even if you are going to run an election in Canada, we have to get permission from that group. I don't know what we have here in Canada. A lot of people don't know, but everything is on the CD. Definitely, we have to get permission.

This group is creating more hatred among the Tamils than anything. There are more Sikh MPs than the population... [*Inaudible—Editor*]. As Canadians, we don't look at it as Sikh, Muslim, French, or anything. We work as Canadians.

If we are going to allow this group to do this, the RCMP can't do anything here. Nobody can, because the laws are tight and you can't do anything. In fact, nobody gets advice from the RCMP before they even allow a guy to come into Canada. This is the biggest problem we have here. Anybody can walk in. But what are the politicians doing? Nothing.

I am telling you that today when I go out of here after telling these things, my family and my life will be in trouble. That's the life that most of us Tamils are living in Canada, especially in Toronto. Everything is happening, but what actions are taken here? There's nothing. How can we clean up other people's backyards unless we clean up our own backyard?

When you look at these CDs, you can see what is happening. Even the media and the TV can't video and broadcast these things unless they get permission from this group. I am telling you everything on the CD. The newscaster is telling what is happening. How can a human being like me can stop it?

I have a couple of examples. They even came to my house three times and asked for money. They asked me for \$2,000. They said, "Give us your number, your PIN." I said that I didn't have that kind of money. They said I should move from my small house, that I should sell my house and give them the money. The guy who came to collect money from my house has upgraded his house and he has bought a van, without cash. Where's the money? What action we can take?

Also, for public meetings, what they do is that they don't announce any event until the previous evening. Only at six o'clock will they say that this event is taking place and at what place. What can the RCMP or anybody do? Nobody can do anything, with the law as it is. What's the point of having security forces there to look after the people when they can't act? Unless laws are changed in Canada to help, we are going to be in big trouble.

Thank you.

● (1605)

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

We'll move to our last guest, Mr. Andrew Thavarajasingam.

Father Andrew Thavarajasingam (Reverend Father, Tamil Catholic Mission in Montreal): I'm Andrew, a Catholic chaplain from Montreal. I would like to represent the Tamil Catholic community here in Montreal as well as the Catholic community of Sri Lanka.

When we look at the history of Sri Lanka and how the Catholics have emerged, we have to look at the background of the Portuguese and pre-Portuguese period. Before the Portuguese came, there were the Tamil kingdom and the Sinhalese kingdom. Though the Portuguese introduced Catholicism into Sri Lanka, they did not divide the rule. The Dutch period from 1656 up to the 18th century lasted for a long time. Only when the British came was it united, and they tried to rule Sri Lanka under one rule of British governance. In 1833 an administrative manager was appointed, and they tried ruling in that way up to 1948, when they gave independence to Sri Lanka.

As a Tamil from the affected area of Jaffna, my hometown of Vasavilan was badly affected due to these civil war conditions in Sri Lanka. My village was occupied by the Sri Lankan forces, and we were asked to evacuate our hometown. We moved to Jaffna, and even from there we could not hold on. The Tamils are facing repeated displacements due to the civil war conditions.

For a long historical period the Tamils have tried to tolerate the Sinhalese community. They have tried to live together peacefully, but due to political conditions, the political leaders always introduced a system to attract the votes of the majority Sinhalese when they wanted to come to power, and there were always communal riots due to this political environment.

When we look at the present situation in Sri Lanka, civilians are being killed every day, and because of the killing of civilians, even the people who have come out of Sri Lanka are being affected. My own parish members have reported to me about their relatives being killed. Even last week one family member who wanted to send some money to help his family members in Sri Lanka, who are in the affected area, could not do so because there is no immediate access to the people who are really affected.

•(1610)

Therefore, the problem of the Tamils has to be seen against the background of the long-evolving historical period of Sri Lanka. It has to be understood that the Tamils have to have the right to live in their own land. Their human values have to be respected. The Tamils living in the affected area are finding it difficult to come out of the area, because they feel insecure when they come out of the war-torn area. Therefore, Canadian Tamils living in this country urge this government to call for a pause in this civil war condition, an end to the war, and a taking up of peace negotiations so that the rights of the Tamils may be respected.

As an immediate measure, we propose that the war be stopped. There should be some way for the expatriates to take care of the needs of the affected people. Because of the economic blockade to the affected areas, the people do not even have enough food and medicine at present. Those needs must be met through the international NGOs, and the Tamils living in Canada are expecting the Canadian government to make an arrangement for the Tamils to help their affected kith and kin back in Sri Lanka.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony. We will move into the first round and go to Monsieur Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, all five of you, for being here. I'll go very quickly, because times pass quite quickly.

First of all, Mr. Nizam just mentioned Health Partners. I know them very well and I have carried medication myself on some trips to Africa. They're a great association. I just wanted you to know about this; we know them very well.

I have a question for Mr. Nizam.

You proposed a round table to bring peace. First of all, on what grounds do you want peace over there? It seems that in a short time the LTTE will be out of their country, in a certain sense. There was a peace process with the northern European countries under the umbrella of Norway—a very successful peace process, in a sense. But it's always starting over. In my understanding, the conflict goes back as far as the Brits and the Tamil government, and right now that would be the new government for the independence.... I mean, the Sinhalese are 80% of the population. There are the ethnic community problems and also religious problems.

We need to talk about the religious problems. What are the grounds? Who should be the leader to try to bring peace over there? This question is for all of you.

I have a question also *pour le révérend père* from Montreal. I just want to understand—and the Muslims also could answer this question—do the Catholics have the same problem as the Tamil Sikhs and Hindus and others face? Do you have any people among these 200,000 people who are kept hostage in the northeast by the LTTE? Do you have any family there? How does it work?

We'll start with Mr. Nizam.

•(1615)

Mr. Noor Nizam: Thank you.

I know the peace process because I was one of those who initiated the peace process. You have my bio there.

The failure of the peace process was not the failure of the will of the Tamil people and the Sinhalese people and the Muslims. The failure of the peace process was because the people who engaged in the peace process were unfair to the Muslims. We were sidelined. We are 1.7 million people. The Tamils are 13%, and the Sinhalese are 72%. How can you bring peace without all three communities sitting at a table and talking to each other, which we did 50 years ago? We speak the Tamil language. We have the culture. The only thing different between the Tamils and us is our faith. The Sinhalese are Sri Lankans. They are of the same country. Their children and our children were together, but after 1956 and 1972, something happened.

I am saying here that if there is a political resolution, and if the international community is putting pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka, and the Government of Sri Lanka is willing to look into it in the aftermath of the LTTE, as you set out, then I think Canada should play an important role. Don't go by the process criteria and take two years, six months, or eight months to think about how to do it. Get down to it and say, okay, we can bring....

Let me say, sir, that the IPKF came into Sri Lanka outside the covenant of international law. Why can't Canada propose a covenant that is necessary for the Tamils, the Muslims, the Sri Lankans, and the Sinhalese together? Canada can take a role. Here we have communications experts to bring them to sit and talk peace. Because peace is not for us; it is for the next generation.

Thank you.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Are there any other answers?

[*Translation*]

Do you have any comments?

[*English*]

Father Andrew Thavarajasingam: Even the Catholics are being affected, because most of the Catholics live in the coastal area of Sri Lanka. They have problems from naval attacks. When I was in Jaffna, the St. James Church was attacked when the people went there for safety. At Naval, in Jaffna, St. Nicholas' Church was attacked. St. Peter's Church was attacked. Also, I was appointed parish priest of Mullaitivu, and when I went there, that was destroyed. When I went to live there, I had to face a narrow escape from the aerial bombing of that area.

So what I say is that to a certain extent the war has attacked the Catholic Church also. We see that even in the famous Shrine of Madhu, where the people took shelter. It was declared a peace zone, and it was shelled, but we never knew who shelled it. Each of them was blamed.

What I am concerned about are the civilian people there dying and the civilians here who are being morally affected by the situation. Therefore, the war should be stopped, and unnecessary deaths should be stopped, by the international community.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Ratnamalala.

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: The question was raised about the Catholics being hurt in the other parts of Sri Lanka. That is not true. There are Sinhalese who are also Catholic. A large majority of Sinhalese are Catholic, and a large majority of Tamils are also Catholic, and they are living very peacefully in the southern part of Sri Lanka. Because there's a war, there is trouble. It does not mean that Catholics are targeted. That's not true.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I didn't say that. I just want to understand.

Mr. Muttukumar Chandrakumaran: I should say that from 1983 up until 2002 there was war. When the 2002 peace accord was signed, the country was completely in harmony. How did harmony come? Did anybody tell them? No. Really, both kinds of people want to live in peace. But nobody wants peace; the money is playing the game there. Even in the last presidential election, not a single person from the northern part was allowed to vote.

Even in Canada they don't want peace. That's why I mentioned it to you. If peace comes, some people are going to lose their luxury life here. Easy money, tax-free money—that money is gone unless they just stop. Peace in Sri Lanka cannot be achieved. People in Sri Lanka won't believe in peace. I have seen it. After 22 years, I visited in 2002. I went around Sri Lanka. I was even travelling at midnight. Nobody asked me if I was a Tamil or a Sinhalese. Even when we went to the roadside boutique to buy things, they were treating us like their own family and they were giving us directions about where to go.

So peace can be achieved, but nobody wants peace because people are losing money.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to go to Monsieur Dorion.

Monsieur Dorion, vous avez sept minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Ratnamalala, you mentioned that a large majority of Sinhalese are Catholics. I believe there's a misunderstanding because that's not the case. There is no Catholic majority among the Tamils or among the Sinhalese.

[English]

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: I think there might be a translation problem. What I said was that a large amount of Sinhalese are Catholics and a large amount of Tamils are Catholics.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you. I listened to you in English; it wasn't a translation mistake on my part.

Mr. Sévigny, last week, Mr. Robert Dietz explained to us that the Sri Lankan government does not tolerate the free movement of information on controversial issues and that journalists are regularly assassinated in Sri Lanka. How can you expect a project such as yours, which is to bring communicators into Sri Lanka, to have any chance of success in such circumstances?

Dr. Alexandre Sevigny: In these cases, communication and international or bilateral partnership can do a lot of things. The fact that a country like Canada supports this kind of project, even though it's very limited at the outset, would give the project a lot of credibility.

Furthermore, if the project is carried out as a result of government relations between the two countries and is accepted by the Sri Lankan government at a certain level, even in the case of a pilot project or certain modules of limited scope, it would be a start from which something else could be built.

• (1625)

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you.

Mr. Ratnamalala, I believe I understood that you feel that the solution to the problem of the war in Sri Lanka is for the Sri Lankan government to crush the Tamil Tigers. You say this: "Today, for the first time in the world, Sri Lankan security forces have shown the world that terrorism can be defeated by force." Then you say that this will ultimately be better for everyone.

[English]

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: There are two steps to peace in Sri Lanka. First there should be an end to military violence, and the only way to end military violence is by force. That is my understanding. I have an article from Dr. Michael Radu where he says:

Ultimately, Western views and policies vis-à-vis Sri Lanka prove that humanitarian feelings and "human rights" are no policy alternative to common sense, and that even small countries, if desperate enough, could solve their secessionist/terrorist problems even despite the powerful human right NGOs pressures to commit national suicide. Second, and most important and with wider implications, short term, obsessive preoccupation with "civilian casualties" is often a death sentence to civilians in a civil war. The longer the war, especially when the victor is obvious, the more civilian casualties. Hence a military solution is, in some circumstances, the best way to save civilian lives. In general, pacifism, disguised as "human rights" or not, always leads to more death, especially in remote, third world, small countries vulnerable to the influence of AI or HRW. Ending a war—by force if need be—protects more civilians than prolonging it under any pretexts.

That fits very well with my idea. That is why I handed it to you. Somebody is trying to tell you that because of human rights we have to stop this war. But in the Sri Lankan context, if we have a ceasefire or talks, that will never end because the LTTE does not want to compromise their stand on a separate state. There are so many reasons why Sri Lanka cannot be separated. Therefore if you come to the table to have a separate state, there's no point in having peace talks or any kind of talk. You have to compromise your stand.

The Sri Lankan government has compromised their stand in several ways. At the beginning they didn't like to devolve power. Now they are going to a provincial level and they are going to devolve furthermore. If the LTTE cannot agree or compromise their stand, there's no point in having a ceasefire. The only way is to finish with a military solution and then continue with a political solution—those who understand the value of a political solution and the devolution of power, and those who understand to what limits Sri Lanka could go to solve this conflict.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: What do you think of the argument that crushing them will result in hatred that cannot be extinguished in the Tamil community and that ultimately the war in Sri Lanka will continue for a number of generations?

[*English*]

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: You need to follow the news coming from Sri Lanka, not from the angle of those who want to portray it, but the real news from those who are coming out. There are videos of people just coming out of the area where LTTE is holding these civilians. If you listen to those interviews, you will hear what they want. They want peace in the country. The majority want to live with the Sinhalese in the Sinhalese areas. They want to come to government areas to live peacefully. That is not hatred, according to my understanding. They would be happy to end this war militarily and control the LTTE.

So I don't see any hatred on the part of Tamil people. We saw earlier that in the eastern province Tamils were displaced in the same way. Then the Government of Sri Lanka put them back in their households, and today they are living very happily. A former LTTE leader came out of the LTTE and is now running the eastern province.

So that is not true in the Sri Lankan context. But if you can tell from here...you can see it is ahead. That is not true.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to the government. Go ahead, Mr. Abbott, please.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Nizam, I thank you for your presentation, but I found some of it to be less than accurate.

I believe you said that you were looking for CIDA to get involved and take part. Perhaps you weren't aware that last year alone CIDA contributed \$7.5 million to Sri Lanka. Specifically, you can take a look at the \$1.5 million in support to the International Committee of the Red Cross; the \$750,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is expected to be able to positively impact a quarter of a million people; Canada's contribution of \$3 million through the international community of the Red Cross, Canadian NGOs, and on and on.

If what you're looking for is money directly from the people of Canada through CIDA, the granting agency, to organizations other than the Red Cross, other than World Vision, or other than

recognized NGOs, it's not going to happen. Do you have any comment on that?

Mr. Noor Nizam: Yes, I have.

First and foremost, I have to thank Canada for all that it has done, in terms of how you explained it.

The issue for me here today is not the past. The issue for me here is the present, and the issue for me is the future. Presently, we need Canadian engagement to help the people in Sri Lanka, to help whoever is engaged in humanitarian work to carry on that work with support from Canadian authorities.

CIDA is the arm of the foreign ministry that executes this aid. It is very clearly pointed out that CIDA gave \$3 million on February 26. I was only pinpointing that figure. As well, \$500,000 was given to CARE Canada. It has not gone.

People are suffering in Sri Lanka. It is not only the people in the Vanni region and those coming out of the enclave who are suffering; others also are suffering, and there are organizations, small organizations, that can do a lot. I just proved how HPIC is able to give us donations of medicine, but we find it difficult to carry because of our capacity to raise funds. For every shipment of five or six packages, we have to spend about \$4,000 to \$5,000. This is my issue.

It's the same issue when it comes to the Muslim community. For 23 years we have been sidelined. We are a Tamil-speaking minority community. For 23 long years we have been sidelined. Now there is a silver lining on the horizon—the lining of peace, the lining of hope.

How is Canada not thinking about us? Why is Canada still adamant to forget the 1.7 million people who live 40% in the northeast and not help them with medical care, with hospitals?

Look at the tsunami programs. I don't have time to present, but I can show you enough evidence that the whole development program of the Muslim community has been completely buried.

The government has been generous. The problem with the Muslims in Sri Lanka is that they always believe in democracy, democratic institutions, and peace, and we value any government that comes to power. Whether it is a Tamil government, a Sinhalese government, or a Burgher government, we work with them.

We have never in history been violent. Where I come from is the only country in the world, I'm proud to say—and I am a Canadian today, in the same manner—that has never touched arms and ammunition, but we have been destroyed by this war. We have been robbed of our homes, our children, our health care, our medicines, and our clinics.

Please, sir, come to Sri Lanka. Go to Sri Lanka one day and tour the eastern points. Twenty-seven students from McMaster went to a little village called Kinniya, and they were crying when they came back. They were so determined. They're building homes there, with not a cent from CIDA. We don't want CIDA aid. We don't want it.

•(1635)

Hon. Jim Abbott: Then I don't understand what you're saying. You don't want CIDA aid, yet you seem to be condemning the Canadian people and CIDA for not ponying up. I don't understand your point.

Mr. Noor Nizam: I'm not condemning. When I say "we don't want", I'm talking of the civil society, the NGOs, the small NGOs that are doing their little jobs. I am saying that Canada and CIDA have to streamline their systems so that in the future they can accommodate small groups, small organizations, individuals, who, like me, are trying to do a small job, so that they can, for example, deliver more physician kits, more medicine, more food, and join hands with....

We are working with the Government Medical Officers' Association, an arm that has 7,000 doctors willing to work. You can't label them as the Sri Lankan government. They are in the government service, they are working in the health ministry, but they are humans. They are volunteering to go and work, and we have to support them. They don't have a pipeline to the resources. There are certain regulations that are laid down, and those preconditions always sideline us and help only big organizations. So this is the issue that I took up here.

In plain language, can CIDA allocate some money to help Partners International, to help us to get more of these physician kits sent to Sri Lanka, so that they can reach the people in Navaly, people in Batticaloa, Pulmoddai, Trincomalee, Kattankudi, Nintavur, and Akkaraipattu. There is so much need in these places. And how much can a government do under the circumstances?

This was my issue. I wasn't complaining or pointing fingers at the Canadian people, of whom I am one. I'm asking us to look into it and streamline the methodology so that at least there is a small reserve fund that can be created under CIDA, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or even under the Glyn Berry program. We need funds for the programs we are doing. What can five boxes of medicine do for IDPs? There are 58,000 IDPs. The health ministry and the WHO are trying their best to do what they can. So we need help.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair, and my thanks to our guests.

Here at committee, in the media, and in reports coming from Sri Lanka, we've been hearing that this is a war of attrition: wipe out the Tigers and then we'll carry on from there. Some concerns have been put forward about the Tigers. There's also profound concern within the international community and Canada that people are sitting back and waiting for this to be over, and that all we can do is wait till the government, through its army, has wiped out the other side. This is not exactly a rosy picture. It's a picture that has been painted time and again for us at committee.

There have been a couple of ideas—and I'll start with Mr. Sévigny—about Canada's role. One is that Canada should state it's unequivocal concern about their army's use of violence, notwithstanding its right to deal with the insurgency, as it sees it. The concern is that the tactics being used are creating an IDP problem, and we just don't know what's going on. Some 23,000 people left the

northeast region in March, and we're hearing 33,000 for the month of February.

Should Canada send one of its government representatives, say, a minister, to Sri Lanka, to clarify our concerns? With respect to aid, we've sent some money, and I'm sure it's welcome, to the extent that you can get it through. But what other forms of aid should we be sending, and how much?

Mr. Sévigny.

•(1640)

Dr. Alexandre Sévigny: Whether or not Canada should send an official representative to express an opinion is a matter of government policy. I think once Canada forms an opinion—

Mr. Paul Dewar: We're trying to help them here, so please go ahead and help us.

Dr. Alexandre Sévigny: Once we form an opinion, and once we have an opinion that actually makes sense to the diaspora...because if you think about the round table idea or the communications idea, one of the ideas that are going to affect Canadian citizens is that we want harmony among the people of Sri Lankan descent who live in Canada, whether they emigrated directly from that country or were born here, and we want harmony between them and their former country. So if a large consultative process like this results in an opinion, whatever that opinion is, yes, it should be communicated very directly.

Your second question is a good one. While transferring money for products is a very important thing, it's a process that takes time and a process that, to put it bluntly, can be hijacked. And it can have a lot of intermediate steps in which the effectiveness of the resources, whether material or economic, is diluted. What Canadians have in communications, engineering, and in all sorts of different areas is extraordinary expertise.

I'll speak to my own area. Canadians are amongst the most effective communicators in the world. If you look at our country, it has very far-flung communities, small communities scattered over gigantic spaces. Yet we've managed to create system after system that enable extremely diverse groups to maintain their identities while also maintaining a cohesive national identity through the use of technology and effective socio-scientific tools. Transferring that kind of expertise from the private sector, government, and academe to a place where there is very limited freedom of the press, where journalists are regularly challenged and repressed, and setting an example from Canada through the transfer of that expertise can achieve extraordinary things.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'd like to ask this of the others too. I don't know how much time I have left.

The Chair: You have about a minute.

Mr. Noor Nizam: Yes, sir, to directly address the area of communications, I would say it's a protocol of international relations and bilateral government-to-government dealings. But India made a special stage during the IPKF issue, and Canada should do things the same way. And I would ask the Canadian high commissioner, Mrs. Bogdan, in Colombo to become a little friendlier and try to break through.

Number two, as for sending funds and money, yes, we need to do that, but try to bring in the private sector too. I'm looking at the future, not the past and what's happening now. In the future, the Canadian private sector can play a big role in developing the north, the northeast, and the eastern province. I've been involved in certain areas.

I can definitely tell you that my city of Hamilton could have big markets there, because there is going to be a \$45 billion market in Sri Lanka very soon if the war finishes, because you can't allow the Tamils to live the way they've lived for the last 23 years. You have to give them a better way of life, via infrastructure, development, fisheries, etc. Yes, you don't need to give them aid, for example, but you can support them with Canadian investment. In the time of decision, that would be an advantage.

Thank you.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nizam.

We'll move to Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you.

I think I'm sharing my time.

The Chair: Yes, with Mr. Lunney.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much.

I think I need to express a little concern here about what I'm hearing. We've heard three people with professional designations in communications say that communication is what is needed in Sri Lanka. Yet your professional abilities have not been able to help there. I guess I would question, why is that?

I don't speak the language, so I obviously have a problem with communication, and that's to my detriment. But you speak the language, and so I guess I would challenge you to take up that cause. That would be my first comment, but it's not a question.

I do have a question for Mr. Chandrakumar. In your remarks, you talked about extortion and the demand for money, which we've heard about over and over again in Canada. Why do the people who are being extorted not come forward? We need these people to come to the police. We would take the extortionists before the full extent of the law, but we need the witnesses to show up in court, and that doesn't happen. How do we make that happen in order to make the extortion stop?

Mr. Muttukumar Chandrakumar: The problem is—I openly said that I was remanded, and I should say that I'm the first person to say this publicly—people know and people are scared to talk because they are worried about their relatives back at home going missing and their houses being targeted and vandalized.

I also sit on the Durham police advisory committee. I was speaking to one of the officers, and the law in Canada's system is there. It's not that easy to charge somebody. Even if somebody comes and gives witness, it's not that possible to charge them. Unless the committee or somebody sits down with the RCMP or CSIS, I don't know what improvement can be done in the law that gives them more access to these types of charges. I spoke to the officers, and they told me the politicians don't listen to them; they decide themselves. That shows there is bad communication between the security officials and the politicians, because the last time a person came to Canada, everybody knew that he had come the previous year and some blunders were made. He was kept at the airport for six hours and he was questioned. He came here and he targeted the youth. When he went back to Malaysia, to what he called a third world country, he was immediately put on the next plane and sent out. When he returned to his own country, he was questioned by the home security.

So where are we going wrong? Even the border security allows somebody to come. The intelligence service or RCMP should have the power. If they feel this man is a danger to this country, he should be deported, but there are no provisions. When they heard that this man was in this country, they asked, "What can we do? We don't deal with the border security." There is no communication or link between the border security and the RCMP. That has to be broken. I don't know how the politicians can help. You have to work with the security and get a good link. Only then can we achieve something.

For example, today, tomorrow, they are fundraising to help the people. Where is the money going? They are having events. Do they have an account where the money is collected, where the money is going? Every day they are doing fundraising. Where is the money going? Proper receipts are given. Nobody knows.

Ms. Lois Brown: My comment to that is we do have significant enforcement in Canada. If extortion is taking place in Canada, we need the people to come forward to act as witnesses so that we can prosecute.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown. We're out of time.

Mr. Ratnamalala.

• (1650)

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: I would just like to add to that point.

There's one incident that took place in Toronto. The gentleman called police right away while the person who asked him for money was right in his house. The police reached the house and they advised the person who came to collect money to leave the house. The owner of the house told police this man had asked him for money. The Toronto police said, "Sorry, we can't help. That has to be done by the Attorney General of Canada." So they are not dealing with terrorism issues.

They are desperately without laws in this country. The police forces are desperately without laws. These terrorists know exactly what the loose points are so they act accordingly. They go right up to the point where the law cannot be held against them. So this has to be changed. That is what we are asking you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Folco.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

Actually, I would like to follow up on the question and comment of my colleague Lois Brown.

Many of the questions you've had so far have dealt with what's happening in Sri Lanka, and of course that is extremely important. But I'd like to talk about what is happening right here in Canada. I've heard from several of you, and of course I'd heard about this before, and I'd like to hear from you very specifically what you see as strong federal government intervention in terms of the threats, both physical and verbal, that the community is receiving throughout Canada.

You're not necessarily the only group that is being affected by this. What we have seen as an unfortunate consequence of immigration—and I say “unfortunate” because I've been working in immigration for years—is the fact that in certain groups what we see is an offshoot of the immigrant group that is very concerned about what is going on in the home country, to the detriment of what is going on here in Canada. It spends all its energy working on what is going on in their country of origin. So there's a fine line for us that has to be made for us Canadians, and particularly for members of government, between respecting under our multiculturalism the religion, the origins, and the language of people who have arrived—which of course we want to do—but at the same time making sure that the integration into the Canadian social fabric goes on.

It seems to me that what some groups are doing is crossing that line—and I'm not naming any groups on purpose, and they're minorities, I know, but they're a very strong minority in the Sri Lankan community in Canada. They are spending a lot of time, energy, and money, and very often illegally.

So the question I am asking of you is this. What can we as a government do? And I'd like you to be as concrete as possible in your reply, please. I don't know who I'm addressing the question to. Perhaps Mr. Ratnamalala, first, and perhaps Mr. Nizam would want to add something later on. I have a very short time, so I'll ask you to be very short.

Mr. Hasaka Ratnamalala: Thank you.

Actually, that is one of the greatest points we have to address right here. The Canadian law has to be re-examined, as Mr. Chandrakumar said. The flow of communication between the town police and the RCMP has to be more and more, with some kind of actual role taking place between the two, because when there is a terrorist issue they cannot take action. Even last time when there was this flag issue in Toronto, a certain precedence was given to certain organizations to raise a terrorist flag. Certain organizations were not allowed to carry their flags, but certain other organizations were allowed to carry their flags. On that point there was a clear-cut difference in the law in this country.

That actually has to be understood by the politicians, and the politicians have to deal with the Canadian security agencies. Actually, it is better that the politicians deal directly with them, and in cases where our advice is needed at the witness level, we can give that. But that has to be addressed very soon.

• (1655)

Mr. Noor Nizam: Madam, I'd like to address it very deeply. There are two main issues here.

One, we have to think about the young Canadians, the diaspora of Sri Lankans who were born within the last 23 years. They are Canadians. They have no links, no culture, no traditions, except what they learn from their families.

The other is the cultural network, the mass media network, and the fault of CRTC. You guys know what CRTC is. You guys and I, if we sit in front of a television program—Bell or Rogers or something—we definitely know that we can understand the English programs. If I sit before French, I do not.

But what is happening in the cultural TV programs is so dangerous that I have sometimes phoned the CRTC and CBC and asked. They have given licences for cultural TV, but what the cultural TV is broadcasting is pure terrorism instigation. Indian films, Hindi films, Tamil films are portraying everything that is happening all over the world, especially ATN, Jaya TV, and all this TV that's non-English. You will see that they are promoting violence.

Who is the audience? The young 30% of the Tamil-speaking diaspora. They see violence there. When they are instigated.... Do you want another Khadr to be created within the Tamil Canadian community, to go to Sri Lanka and blast himself up? No. We don't want that. Canadians don't want that. That is the reason.

Again, I'm not referring to the laws that he is talking about, but I'm referring to the CRTC. I have told them many times, so give consideration to that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Is my time up, Mr. Chair? I'd like to make a proposition.

The Chair: Yes, it is, because it's a five-minute round.

Mr. Lunney, then Mr. Crête has a question as well. Very quickly.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Okay, thank you.

Mr. Nizam, you spoke about how peace is not for us, it's for the next generation. I thought that was an interesting remark. You spoke a little bit about the post-war response, what Canada could do. You spoke about developing infrastructure for the Tamil community, and perhaps a fishing industry and so on.

You spoke about developing a covenant between the peoples, a Tamil, Muslim, Christian, and Sinhalese covenant. I wondered if you would care to expand on that.

Mr. Noor Nizam: The philosophy behind a covenant is a written pledge and an undertaking in order to come to peace. I will not take you back to history. You know how the Red Cross was created and how the United Nations was created.

If there is understanding among three groups of communities—the Sinhalese, the Tamils, and the left-out Muslims, and if it is signed and documented, then the people who sign as witnesses and underwrite those covenants—especially Canada in the international community—can hold to task the Sri Lankan government or the three communities if they fail to fulfill the covenant.

I think there is already a covenant happening. It has still not been signed. I can't remember, but it is called the APRC. The PTOMS that we had for tsunami development was blasted by—I don't want to mention them—interested groups who didn't want the Muslim community to come in, the division of the understanding of how we can share.

But let's look to the future that has to happen. We have to fulfill the future now if it is to happen. We can bring a covenant. There is a peace covenant happening. I think the 13th amendment has gone a little further. Yesterday or the day before, the Sri Lankan government said it's a nice note to take care of. It's willing to go beyond, and also it is prepared to give what is called a temporary ceasefire.

This is what I am talking about. This is what I'm telling you. We need communication as a tool to bring this to both the Sri Lankan people, to you guys in Canada, and to me as a Sri Lankan Canadian. I'm half this way and half that way.

Anyway, if we can do that, the covenant will definitely work. I'll tell you, sir, if you ask the 33% of the Tamil youngsters here, “Do you want peace, do you want to go to your country?”, they'll jump up and say, “Oh, I'm going to go.... We want to see it. We want to go. We want to jump. We want to see it.” They can't.

If a covenant is in place and the government is put in place to help it.... I think the Sri Lankan government will help, the Tamil leaders will help, the Muslim politicians will help. If the international community can help, we will start peace. That's where we have to start.

Thank you.

• (1700)

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

Mr. Crête, and then we'll come back. Madame Folco has one more quick question.

Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Reverend Father Andrew, if the committee prepares a report on what it wishes for Sri Lanka and on what Canada can do, how can the diaspora, the Christian community of Montreal and Canada, help establish a lasting and reasonable peace in that country?

[*English*]

Father Andrew Thavarajasingam: I think Canadians should also be able to feel the pulse of the Canadian Tamils. They are Canadians here. They do have their close relatives, particularly Catholics, since they are from coastal areas where the present civil war is affecting their relatives. They want to help them, but they're not in a position to help them. That affects them morally. So this

problem has to be dealt with both ways—the Canadians here to be freed from that moral stress as well as the citizens back in Sri Lanka to be freed from the war conditions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chandrakumaran.

Mr. Muttukumaru Chandrakumaran: For the Canadians to get a feeling they're really helping them back home, I would ask the government to set up an account so that each Canadian can contribute to that account and CIDA or something can match that account and do that project there. That means we are taking the Canadians who are giving money here, and there is a feeling they're helping them there. That way, you can create good relations and good feelings, and we can bring harmony among those people.

So the government should set up an account, rather than have money taken by the greedy people. Most of the Tamil Canadians here are giving money without heart, so if a government account is set up and they can contribute some money, that will see harmony even in Canada, because the people can collect money and 100% of the money will go there. It is also good for Canada; at least they will have done some projects, and people will be happy to be Canadian.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chandrakumaran.

We'll go to Madame Folco just to sum up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know committee members intend to present a report at the end of these hearings. I'm not introducing a motion, but I would like to suggest very strongly that the committee's recommendations include at least one recommendation on the subject that I raised, that is to say the position of Canadians of Sri Lankan origin with regard to terrorism and the illegality of the actions of certain ethnic groups in the community.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Folco.

We want to thank our guests for their attendance today and for their testimony. We certainly appreciate it. We're trying to have a balanced approach from different perspectives on the conflict in Sri Lanka and understanding more about the war that's going on there. Certainly we've been given notice by many different groups that there could be major changes and bloodshed even in the next 15 days in Sri Lanka.

Certainly we thank you for coming and giving of your time for our committee's benefit.

We're going to ask you to make your exit—

•(1705)

Hon. Jim Abbott: Mr. Chair, just very briefly, for the benefit of our researchers, I agree completely with Madame Folco and what she was asking. I think there should be some review of the listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organization. I think successive governments have taken steps in this direction, and I suggest that is one legal avenue that any government, with the enforcement agencies, could be pursuing to assist these gentlemen who are at our desk.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow you to exit.

I am going to ask the committee to stay. We're going to go in camera. There is some committee business we have to do in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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