



House of Commons  
CANADA

# **Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

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SDIR • NUMBER 036 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, December 2, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Scott Reid**



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1235)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)):** Order, please.

Welcome to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It is December 2010, and this is meeting number 36.

[English]

Today we have divided our meeting into two parts. The first part, which will last half an hour, will deal with the issue of sexual assault on women and children in fragile states during peacekeeping operations and situations of conflict.

As an individual testifying before us today we have Jürgen Creutzmann, who is a member of the European Parliament. His specialty is talking about the rights of women and their abuse in Pakistan. Once Mr. Creutzmann has completed his presentation, we will divide up our questions based on the amount of time we have left in that half hour. I'll figure out how much is available for each question based on how much time we have at that moment.

Mr. Creutzmann, I invite you to begin, please.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann (Member of the European Parliament, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee on human rights in the Canadian Parliament.

First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to your honourable House, and for giving me the opportunity to speak about a human rights issue close to my heart—namely, violence against women in Pakistan.

On November 11, 2010, Asia Bibi was declared a blasphemer and sentenced to death by a Pakistani court. As a reaction, millions around the world raised concern over the subhuman treatment of the non-Muslims in Pakistan, and demanded Asia's immediate release.

However, there are many more women like Asia in Pakistan who have become victims of the socio-political system and yet have failed to receive attention from the international community.

Asia Bibi was implicated based on her religious background. However, the majority of Muslim women of Pakistan also become regular victims of similar forms of persecution, which often lead to physical and mental impairment, and sometimes even death.

In the majority of cases, both the state and male relatives of the victim are found to be involved, which makes it almost impossible to secure a respected status for women in Pakistani society.

Pakistan is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which guarantees equality to both genders in society. Yet more than 70% of Pakistani women continue to face violence in the form of injuries, death, honour killing, forced nudity in public, molestation, acid burns, mutilation, rape, social boycott, arrest during professional duties, denial of monetary assistance, and discrimination in educational and health institutions and in business.

Between January and June of 2010, there was a 13% increase in the rate of violence against women in Pakistan. According to government sources, more than 9,400 cases of crimes against women were registered in 2009, which was a 20% increase compared to the year 2008. In 2009, village authorities in Balochistan decreed burying four women alive who wanted to marry the men of their choice. Women who want to escape wife-beating are accused of immorality, and often are subjected to mutilation of nose, eyes, lips, and ears. Some are beaten to death, and others are subjected to acid burns.

According to the Ansar Burney Trust, every seventh day a woman becomes the victim of an acid attack in Pakistan. In 2009 acid attack incidents increased by 19% compared to the previous year. Wives who fail to pay adequate dowries to their bridegrooms are subjected to beating and gas cylinder accidents, often causing third-degree burns and subsequent death.

The Ansar Burney Trust reports that eight women, including four minors, are raped every day in Pakistan.

The Aurat Foundation states that abduction and kidnapping contributed toward almost one-third of the total criminal cases against women between January and June of 2010.

The Pakistani state must honour the UN declaration to eliminate all kinds of violence against women in public and private life. The rulers must make efforts to enhance education on gender equality. Police and the judiciary should be reformed to address the needs of women. Such customs as dowries should be declared illegal.

The media can play a positive role, and progressive religious scholars should be given more time on the radio and television in this regard.

My speech would be incomplete without mentioning the status of women in Gilgit-Baltistan—a region strategically located between Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and China—which has remained under Pakistan's occupation since 1947. Gilgit-Baltistan is part of the former princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, which continues to experience human rights violations under the oppressive Pakistani military.

Pakistan's policies have hurt the region, and the female segment of society suffers the most from these injustices.

Recently we registered a non-profit organization presence, by the name of Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan, to evaluate the suffering of the flood victims in this region who are neglected by the Pakistani government. Eventually, the scope of the activities of this organization could be extended to also address the problems of violence against women.

According to World Bank estimates, the number of government-sponsored schools in Gilgit-Baltistan covers less than 5% of the total female population of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Like education, the health sector catering to the needs of the women of Gilgit-Baltistan also lacks attention. For instance, the entire region of Gilgit-Baltistan is over two million people; it's dependent on one single gynecologist.

Security forces present in Gilgit-Baltistan commit terrible crimes against the native women with impunity. Police and security forces act as sexual predators and use rape as a psychological weapon to defile honour and induce fear. The women living in the villages along the line of control are regularly victimized by the security forces, militants, and police authorities.

The solution to these problems lies in the withdrawal of Pakistani security forces and the terrorists who, without any fear of accountability for their actions, roam free and terrorize women in the villages along the line of control.

As a member of the European Parliament and chair of the Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan, which adopted a resolution by an overwhelming majority demanding political and economic reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2007, I have asked from Pakistan that women, who constitute more than half of the total population of Gilgit-Baltistan, be given equal rights, especially equal access to education and health facilities.

For this reason, the international community should call on Pakistan to improve the living standards of the women in Gilgit-Baltistan before expecting any grants and development funds. I would also encourage the members of this committee and the Canadian Parliament to look into the issues of violence against women in Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan and take action against these human rights violations.

Thank you very much.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Just looking at the time, we have enough time to do question-and-answer rounds that are five minutes long. I want to urge all the members of the committee to remember that if you eat up the five

minutes with a question, you don't get much of an answer. So let's keep our questions short. Make them questions, not statements.

We'll start with the Liberals.

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

We have had several reports about what's taking place in Pakistan, by groups ranging from Amnesty International to Human Rights Watch to other human rights organizations, that are deeply troubling—everything from murder to torture of political prisoners and political activists, both in Gilgit-Baltistan and also in the Baluchi area. There are about 40 arrests of leaders this year that we know of. We have deeply troubling issues of women's and girls' rights constantly being violated, cases in which there is rape, domestic violence, and forced marriages.

We have discriminatory laws and violence against religious minorities as well taking place in Pakistan. Some reports talk about corruption being widespread within the government, and about the police force and the government making few attempts to combat the problems of rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. Abuse against women remains a serious problem. Honour crimes and discriminatory legislation affect women and religious minorities respectively. Religious freedom violations and inter-sectarian religious conflict continue, with several bombings, both the Ahmadiyyan community and the Christian community being attacked in Pakistan.

Just recently, there was WikiLeaks talk also about the proliferation of nuclear weapons taking place in Pakistan, with the west being very much concerned about those weapons getting into terrorist hands.

I know that you and members of the European Parliament have been very much concerned about the human rights situation in Pakistan. You are the chair of the Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan. I believe the European Parliament—and maybe you could speak further on this—has passed a resolution talking about the human rights violations experience of being denied basic rights suffered by people in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan, including incredibly high rates of illiteracy, poverty, local officials being jailed, and lack of basic democracy and self-governance.

Would you please elaborate on what the European Parliament has done in terms of that resolution of May 24, 2007? And also, what has been the reaction of the Pakistan government, and what further action could the European Parliament and we as the Canadian Parliament take to help the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** The problem is that our last resolution was passed in 2007. It was a very detailed resolution about the problems in Pakistan.

You know there is a conflict between India and Pakistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan is one area that's very close to Kashmir. That's a problem. You have to ensure there is not another war between the two big countries, because they both have nuclear weapons and it could be an issue.

When I asked some people why India was so interested in this issue, they said that when the Americans leave Afghanistan, it could be a very crucial situation, because when all of its soldiers are out of the region, this could create problems there. That's why it's very important to look at the issues in that area, because we should look at these before a war comes, or whatever.

We have a lot of weak areas in the world, which is another reason we should consider this area. China is also interested in the area because they have a lot of mining operations, and they have water for Pakistan. That's why this is a very crucial issue.

We have to look at the issue before it is too late.

•(1245)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** There were 522 members who voted in favour of the resolution before the European Parliament—I have your brochures, which I'd like to distribute to members—so it was a very strong condemnation of Pakistan for the human rights violations taking place in that country, specifically in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan.

I just think that we as parliamentarians should be doing exactly the same thing as the Europeans, who have shown leadership on this.

Has there been any fallout? Have there been any discussions since that resolution? Has there been a delegation of parliamentarians going to see what's taking place in that region?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** We have to think that it's been three years since the resolution was passed. It was a big majority, as you mentioned. We have to get very close to the issue again. When you make a resolution and the other partner says lies—perhaps something has changed a little bit, but not too much—you have to consider, from time to time, going public. The only thing you can do is generate publicity via the press or in parliaments and create a little bit of pressure on the Pakistani government to change a little bit.

In Gilgit-Baltistan there were so-called provincial elections, but no one among the people living there was allowed to found a party and be voted for. All of the parties came from elsewhere in Pakistan, and that's the problem. We should give them a little more self-determination; that's the only thing you can do to help the people there. They are very poor.

For example, during the Pakistani flood, a lot of flood victims were also from Gilgit-Baltistan, but the money that was given to Pakistan didn't go to Gilgit-Baltistan or that area. So you can see that is a big problem.

In terms of violence against women—I have a picture here of Ansar Burney Trust—the violent acid attacks on women are a big problem.

**The Chair:** That is the first round.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dorion, please.

**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being with us and telling us about a situation which seems quite appalling.

In Canada and Québec, there is a large Pakistani population. In our contact with that community, we generally do not see, at least in the immigrant Pakistani population here in Canada, problems as serious as the ones you're speaking out against in Pakistan. I suppose one can assume that immigrants to Canada are from a better educated and more successful segment of the population.

In Pakistan itself, I presume there are major differences in the amount of violence of this kind that occurs, depending on people's social class and whether they are educated and better off, or poor and less educated. Is that what you've seen? If that's the case, that would mean that Pakistani leaders may be indifferent to what is going on in the lower social classes and to the fact that there are two cultures? Is that what you have observed?

•(1250)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Yes. You see, when somebody leaves the country for another, normally they're among the best; that's true in every wave of immigration. If you look at the immigrants who come into a country, it is the well-educated who are coming. They say, okay, I have a chance in that country, a chance to live in a free land like Canada.

There are big differences between the wealthier people and the poor people—and you see this coming from religion a little bit—such that perhaps in well-educated families the violence is not so strong and the respect for women is perhaps better than among the lower-educated classes. I think that is a problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** There was even a woman leader in Pakistan for several years, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, and she played an important role in Pakistan's political life.

In your opinion, is that an illustration of the fact that in the educated and successful social classes, which are running the country, women have a much higher status?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Yes, I would agree.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** We have heard that there are female police forces that handle this type of offence, but we're told that they are not effective.

In your opinion, what should be done to increase the number of women police officers, so that women are done justice and are better treated?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** It would be good. You see this in a country such as the one I come from, Germany, where we have a lot more women as police. They can take part in de-escalation and can build up trust.

It would be a great advantage if they were to do likewise, but you have to look at the problem that here you have the religious problem, the social interest problem, of Muslims dominating. That's why the violence against women is coming from the religious; that's the main problem you can see, and nobody will change it.

It is the same problem we have here even in the meeting about Afghanistan: as you have said, the same problem is coming out, that the majority are Muslims and that it's normal from the religious standpoint that you have violence and other things practised against women.

That's the problem there, and they have to change. They need more gender respect, I would say, and more respect toward women, without religion dominating. We know that from other countries, where it's clear that women should not be violated.

That's the main problem I see, that the religious foundation is one of the bases, as I have told you in my remarks.

**The Chair:** That completes the time we have for that question.

[Translation]

I'm sorry, but your time is up.

[English]

Please go ahead, Mr. Marston.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Thank you for your testimony today, and thank you for the work that the government is doing on this file. It's interesting to listen to your descriptions, because what you are describing is a very pervasive, widespread physical and sexual abuse of women in Pakistan. That is close to the same kinds of testimony we've heard about Afghanistan. Of course, there's a more direct conflict happening in Afghanistan. But it sounds as though the discrimination against women in particular runs very deep culturally. It's not just a matter of a few loose cannons in the government who are doing this; it's widespread and goes deep into the society.

Our study is on the sexual assault of women and children during peacekeeping operations or in fragile states or in situations of conflict. You have this situation in which the so-called insurgents in Afghanistan go back into the Swat valley, if I remember correctly, in Pakistan. I'm wondering, first of all, whether you see an added impact in Pakistan as a result of that, more or less.

The other thing I'm wondering is this. This is an awkward one, in the sense that we heard testimony earlier this week that in Afghanistan young boys are paraded around dressed as girls and then sold to the highest bidder, fundamentally, and the abuses just begin at that stage.

Are there things like that also occurring in Pakistan?

• (1255)

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** This I don't know. What I saw yesterday evening was very interesting for me. It could be that what you describe is coming out from the culture. I would say that what you have in Afghanistan...perhaps not so strongly, because you have the domination of the Taliban and so on. They have the same culture. They have the same religious background...and it could be that also.

I have here, from Amnesty International, their report on violence against women and girls. Women continue to be victims of honour killings, I would like to mention, with 960 incidents reported. In September the Punjab law minister announced that crimes against women would be tried under the anti-terrorism act. Taliban groups closed or burned down girls schools, forced women to wear a veil,

and prohibited them from leaving their homes unless accompanied by male relatives. Several women were punished, shot dead, or mutilated for alleged immoral activities.

This is coming from the religious ones in the country. The problem is that they will not change their culture.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I spent some time in the Middle East in the seventies. There's a separation between what is religious-based and what's cultural. You find that most of the mutilations and the honour killings and all those things have nothing to do with Islam at all. They have more to do with the cultural society that they're in, and they tend to be—at least in the experience I had—associated more with very poor, uneducated people. It seems to me that to begin to address this, you have to have a government in place that's going to say, “We have to change the culture, we have to educate people that this is wrong.”

In our society, the religious community would join in that. That might be something that hopefully could happen in these countries. I'm not so sure how we go about it, but as I listened to your testimony during your remarks, you were saying that any aid money that was going over there should be tied to some demonstrated change.

The hard part about that is to decide what the benchmarks are and what the timeline is. How do you say you've done this? We were talking about tying aid dollars that go to Afghanistan with human rights changes there. That's probably the only real tool we have.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** I would say that what you mention is very important. The problem is also education. That's why you have to invest in education: when you have higher-educated people, you have more respect for women, for example.

But there's also a lack of money going into this. I mentioned that you have only one school in that region for women. That is the main problem I see. We should give money to them in that area not for fighting but for providing better education. When you have better education, the government can also bring a little bit of thinking into—

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** But they have to find their own way out of this, in reality. Ultimately they're the ones who are responsible for their own destiny.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Right. You can't compare a democracy to the area they are living in. The only thing I see is that while they will not change their religion, you get better-educated people—

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I would like to interject just for a moment.

You just said that they won't change their religion. I don't really believe that the religion is the problem; I believe that the problem rests in a society that devalues women totally.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** We've used up your time as well, Mr. Marston. I apologize.

Did you have a brief response to that, Mr. Creutzmann?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** No, I agree with what Mr. Marston said. There's no difference.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is it Mr. Hiebert or Mr. Sweet next?

Mr. Hiebert.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Creutzmann, for being with us. I appreciate your testimony. It is, as others have mentioned, similar to the testimony that we received earlier this week about what's happening in Afghanistan. It's absolutely horrendous.

Just to put some context here, you mentioned, I believe, in your testimony a moment ago, if I got it correctly, that there was a surge of abuse by 90% between sometime before 2009 and 2009. Was that correct?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** What I mentioned was that the number of victims increased in a tremendous way. You can see this in all these papers I have about the situation of violence against women in Pakistan; you see that you have 366 cases of murder, 90 cases of honour killings. This is increasing.

I think the percentage I mentioned was for the increase in injuries they have, and it was 19%, not 90%, that I mentioned.

Perhaps my spelling was not so good.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** That's fine.

Do you have any explanation as to why it's increasing by any amount of significance?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** As we were discussing before, my idea or my impression is that in that area of Pakistan they are very close to Afghanistan, and they have the same culture—not the same religion, but let's say the same culture—and that's a problem. The man is dominant and there is no respect for women or girls.

The only way I see the problem changing is to put a little pressure from outside with the press and have a discussion of these things. Then perhaps the government would change a little bit.

The resolution we made in the European Parliament also changed a little bit, but from time to time you have to edit or adjust it in terms of whatever the problem is. For example, we had a discussion in the European Parliament about the flood victims. I proposed to the commissioner, please don't give money only to the government in Pakistan; please consider giving the money to NGOs living in that area. In Gilgit-Baltistan, for example, there are a lot of flood victims, and only NGOs can help them. That's why we founded the foundation to help the people there.

That's the problem you have. It's very difficult, too, that the Pakistani government is in a war, you would have to say, when you look at Afghanistan and the terrorist attacks happening in Pakistan. They think, "It's not our problem." I mentioned that Gilgit-Baltistan had an election, but nobody in the population could found a party and be elected.

So I think the only thing you can do is have the Europeans, the Canadians—the free societies, I would say—require change for the people who are living there.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** Do you suggest that we as free societies, as you state, tie our aid to actions by the Pakistani government, or other

governments for that matter? Do you think it's a worthwhile foreign policy to say we'll give you a certain amount of money, and if you show us some progress in your areas of human rights then we'll give you more money?

Is that what you're suggesting?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** The problem is that the United States has a strategic interest in that area, and knows there are two countries who have the atomic bomb, Pakistan and India, and therefore absorbed the problems of Afghanistan. That's why the Pakistani government can do a lot and the pressure perhaps will not be so hard, because the U.S. interest in that area is to have the Pakistani government support the U.S. aims, which is perhaps not to win but to come to a good solution in Afghanistan.

The only thing I see is that, as the free world, we say something from time to time on that issue, and there could be a change from time to time. But we have yet a long way to go, I am sure.

● (1305)

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** So you're not necessarily advocating that we tie our aid. You think it's more useful to speak out and to be public about our criticisms—

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Yes.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** —as opposed to holding money at bay.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** When you can do that and it helps...but that's why it makes sense, perhaps, to give money to help non-profit organizations, who are closer. In the morning, I met someone—a doctor here in the Canadian Parliament—who is sending medicine, I understood him to say, to Gilgit-Baltistan. That helps the population more.

In terms of having pressure and saying, "You get money only when you...."

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** Money and resources.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** I fear that threat as a society will not be the way to do it. You can apply pressure on the government publicly, as we're doing here today, and give money, as we did for the flood victims, not directly to the Pakistani government but to non-profit organizations who are very close to the people and who can help them.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I'm looking for just one clarification, if the committee would let me have 30 seconds.

**The Chair:** Sure, go ahead.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Creutzmann, thank you for being here.

I've read a number of things, and one of them is Mortenson's book, *Three Cups of Tea*, regarding this area of Pakistan. It's kind of like the wild west.

You mentioned the American policy. Are you suggesting that because the government wants to contain the Taliban who are running from Afghanistan into that area, this is exacerbating the violence, and may be causing the spike in the violence as well?

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Pardon, could you repeat? I did not understand the question.

**Mr. David Sweet:** You had mentioned a couple of things; I was just trying to tie them together.

You mentioned that you felt that one of the exacerbating elements here was the American policy. I was just asking if that was causing Pakistan to contain that area, and if because of that there was a saturation of Taliban and this was causing the spike in violence.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** What I would like to mention is that we are discussing what we can do, and whether we could put pressure on the government, and how you could follow. I fear that because there are different interests in that area—I will not blame the United States, that is not the problem, but I see they have an interest there—it will be very difficult to look at the human rights. That is my fear.

You can do this with money, but my fear is that they will get the money because they need a stabilized country in Pakistan. I would propose to make it public, to discuss it, and to give money to NGOs. That's why I asked the commissioner to give the money not directly to the government but directly to human rights organizations who are very close to the people and who can help them.

Otherwise, you know, all these areas are very corrupt, and it could be that the money goes directly into the pockets of whoever, not to the people.

That's what I wanted to mention.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you.

Just for the comfort of the witness, I wasn't implying that he was saying the U.S. was complicit. I was just trying to capture why this spike may have happened.

That's all, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much to my colleagues.

**The Chair:** Mr. Silva.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Just very briefly, as we're aware, Mr. Creutzmann is the chair of the European Parliament and the Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan, and they brought brochures. Unfortunately they are all in English, but I have asked that they be translated. I'll have the French copies next week, but I was wondering if I could give the brochures at the moment, with members' permission, in English, and then next week I'll provide the French copies to all the members.

**The Chair:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this manner?

Monsieur Dorion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** Can we be given copies? This is not a document from the House; it's not from the government.

• (1310)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** No, no, it's not from the House.

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** And we will definitely receive the French version next week?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** I have asked my office to ask the Translation Bureau to take care of this. I hope it will be ready by next week.

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** Fine. I have no objection.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, that's perfect. *Merci*.

Thank you, Mr. Creutzmann.

We are going to suspend momentarily to allow a new set of witnesses to take the table.

**Mr. Jürgen Creutzmann:** Thank you very much for your invitation. It was a great pleasure for me to be here.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We are suspended.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_  
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**The Chair:** We are reconvened.

With us today are.... I get the impression that the entire Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is with us today.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Welcome to all of you. Of course, I'm being a bit facetious. It's actually a series of officials who are here.

I'm going to read off your names, but not your titles, because that would take a long time: Elissa Golberg, Neil Reeder, James Junke, Ken Macartney, Donald Bobiash, and Adrian Norfolk. That's simply the order you were in on the list. I'm sure that's probably not the correct order. It wasn't alphabetical.

At any rate, I'm told that Elissa Golberg will be beginning and making the remarks on behalf of the group.

Ms. Golberg, I invite you to begin, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Elissa Golberg (Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force Secretariat, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address the committee on this important subject.

The coordinating responsibility within the Government of Canada for the U.N. Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security resides with the Department of Foreign Affairs, and specifically with the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, for which I am the director general.

We work closely with a number of partners across government on this issue, including CIDA, the RCMP, Public Safety and the Department of National Defence. As you mentioned, several colleagues from DFAIT join me today to address questions you may have about specific geographic situations or broader human rights matters.



The Government of Canada takes seriously its commitment to the women, peace and security agenda. We regard full implementation of the four U.N. Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security—1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889—as important for the long term effectiveness of international responses to conflict or cases of fragility; to protecting civilians in such circumstances; and for building peace that respects the fundamental equality of men and women.

These resolutions commit member states and the U.N. system to a number of goals and activities. First of all, they ask us to consider the fact that women, girls, men and boys each experience war differently. All four resolutions commit member states and the U.N. system to strengthen efforts to prevent violence, including sexual violence; advocate for the active and meaningful participation and representation of women and local women groups in peace and security activity; promote and protect the security and rights of women and girls; and work to ensure women's equal access to humanitarian and development assistance, as well as to justice.

These resolutions provide us with an important framework; but their implementation remains very much a work in progress, both at the international level, as well as for Canada.

I know this committee is particularly interested in these resolutions as they relate to sexual violence. We have seen many contexts where sexual violence is used as a deliberate tactic by the warring parties. Belligerents know that this violence has terrible direct consequences for the women and their families. They also know that sexual violence has the potential to destroy the social fabric of entire communities which can reduce a community's resistance and resilience.

Security Council Resolution 1820, adopted in 2008, was the first Security Council resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war. It notes the particular impact of conflict on civilians and “that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group”.

•(1315)

[English]

Mr. Chairman, Canada has been seized of these issues for many years, having played an important role in the original development of Security Council Resolution 1325, and having fostered a number of the developments in the subsequent resolutions that have emerged before the council in the last year and a half.

A key element of our efforts to implement these resolutions includes strong diplomatic advocacy, and I'd like to give you some examples of the kind of work we've been doing in this respect. For example, Canada has been vocal about the need to ensure that all UN peacekeeping operations have a strong mandate to protect civilians, including preventing sexual violence. While strong mandates are important, they're not sufficient. Peacekeeping operations also need to be given clear operational and tactical guidance so that they can follow through on the mandates that have been issued to them.

We're pleased in this respect that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is working to put in place a strategic framework for

mission-specific protection of civilian strategies. This is something we have long advocated for, including in our capacity as chair of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

Similarly, Canada's been at the forefront of efforts to address issues of sexual violence in the context of humanitarian emergencies, including support we've provided to the UN protection standing capacity and the UN gender capacity standby project. In addition, we've been a consistent supporter of international criminal justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, both of which have worked to hold the perpetrators of sexual violence to account for their crimes. We've played a key role in ensuring that sexual violence has been recognized as a war crime and as a crime against humanity.

In New York, Canada has also used its role as chair of the special Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, and the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, to strategize with partner countries in order to hold the UN system and member states accountable to the commitments they've made, and then to make concrete recommendations to different UN bodies. In fact, Minister Cannon co-chaired a meeting of the group of friends along with the UN Secretary-General this past September.

Finally, with respect to our global engagement, I thought it would be interesting to note the work we've done to support civil society's efforts to implement the women, peace, and security agenda. Examples include efforts to support women's organizations in Burundi, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and Uganda to increase awareness and to advocate around Resolution 1325. We've also been a strong supporter of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which works to track implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, and advocate for actions on its behalf at UN headquarters in New York.

In parallel to the work we've been doing at the multilateral level and at the global policy level, we've also been working to try to integrate these concerns into our country's specific activities. In countries like Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Sudan, Burundi, and others, we've supported a broad spectrum of responses to address inequality and sexual violence. This includes support to improve the monitoring and reporting of sexual violence against women, to provide investigation and human rights training to peacekeeping and local security forces, to ensure that services are in place to the survivors of sexual violence, and to build the capacity of women's organizations in these countries to address and combat sexual violence.

I've limited my summary of all the kinds of activities we've done in geographic situations so that we can have more of a discussion, hopefully, about these issues when we get to the Qs and As.

Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind, I thought I would take a couple of minutes just to talk about the action plan the government adopted on October 5. As I'm sure you're all aware, the government has developed a national action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. The action plan aims to build on our work to date and seeks to enhance Canada's capacity to safeguard and support women and girls during all phases of peace operations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The plan did benefit from fairly extensive consultations with civil society.

The plan is meant to guide the way we develop policy and doctrine; how we will select and deploy our staff abroad, whether it's Canadian police personnel, Canadian Forces personnel, or Canadian civilian personnel from government departments; and how we'll make sure they have the right guidance and knowledge to be able to effectively implement Canadian policies in the field.

The action plan is forward-looking. We very much recognized, as we were developing it, that it's not one of those action plans where we can already tick off all of the things within the action plan as being things the government is in a position to do. It's going to require us to strive to do new things and to do other things differently. And I would submit quite humbly before this committee that it was developed with the understanding that we don't currently have in place all the mechanisms, tools, and strategies to implement what we've set out, but what it does indicate is that we're committed to doing so.

● (1320)

Developing these capacities is going to be especially important as part of the implementation process, and during the first few years of implementation we're hoping to establish our baseline data so that we can continue to improve over time.

The action plan is not a specific project to be implemented in isolation. We very much have attempted to make sure that it's understood by departments and agencies that it's an overarching document meant to influence all of their activities related to women, peace, and security work. When they're doing work on fragile and conflict-affected states or other crisis situations, they're supposed to be bearing in mind and taking into account the actions set out in the plan.

You'll note, therefore, that no specific money has been set aside. We are seeking to make sure that all of our existing work has this lens associated with it. So the work done by Foreign Affairs and CIDA, for instance, with respect to policy development and programming, should be taking into account the national action plan. It should also be taken into account when we're looking at deploying military and civilian personnel to international peace operations.

You would have noticed that we put in indicators wherever practicable to help us measure our progress in areas such as training, policy development and analysis, programming, women's participation, advocacy, and reporting. These indicators will be very crucial to help us to identify any gaps in our response. Canada is among the first countries to actually utilize indicators in its national action plan. We were inspired to do so by the recent decision by the UN to develop indicators in order to increase accountability on this issue.

So the international community, as a whole, is very much learning as they go, and we're benefiting from that.

The government plans to produce an annual report during the lifespan of the action plan up to March 2016. DFAIT will convene regular meetings of an interdepartmental working group, will coordinate with our other government department colleagues, and will look at both qualitative and quantitative input from each organization. The first report will be for the 2011-12 fiscal year. We've also built into the action plan a mid-point review so that we can take stock and assess whether or not there are new things that we need to be adding and what we need to recalibrate.

Each government department and agency is responsible for implementing its components of the action plan, and are responsible as a result for developing their internal processes and policies to do so, while at the same time, hopefully, capturing lessons learned and best practices, which would then get shared within the interdepartmental committee.

Given the committee's specific interest on sexual violence, I thought I would end by just noting some specific elements in the action plan that pertain to that. One important element is the strong emphasis we've tried to place on training. We need to ensure that our deployed personnel have the necessary capacity and appropriate attitude to perform their responsibilities in a manner that takes into account the differentiated experience of conflict on men and women and girls and boys. We think this will better prepare our staff to adequately respond when they do witness or encounter instances of sexual violence.

For example, action 17 requires region- and mission-specific training related to sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and human trafficking. Action 2 outlines the need for a systematic inclusion of modules on women, peace, and security in all Canadian training for military personnel, police, and civilian personnel being deployed operationally. This will include specific training on codes of conduct, cultural awareness, HIV/AIDS, and trafficking in persons, as well as Canadian and international law applicable to the human rights and protection of women and girls.

In conclusion, I would underscore again that we're committed to supporting efforts that prevent violence, including sexual violence against women and girls in conflict, and to protecting their rights in such circumstances.

•(1325)

We believe Canada's action plan will enhance existing Government of Canada collaboration and the effectiveness of our response. The action plan is very much an aspirational document meant to guide policy and programming efforts across the government. We have a lot of work to do between now and 2016 with this first iteration of the action plan to be able to implement what we believe is an ambitious agenda, but we're determined to make progress.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much to all our witnesses.

We're going to go to questions and answers now. We have enough time to allow seven-minute rounds, but just by way of structuring the questions that are asked, I want to point out to members of the committee, in case you haven't already noticed, that we have a person each from the various regions of the world. We have someone dealing with Latin America and the Caribbean, someone else dealing with Africa, someone else for southeast Asia, and so on. You can look at the list and match up the appropriate witness with the region. That will allow you to direct your questions, if you have any region-specific questions. That way, the right person will be able to answer you.

That being said, Mr. Silva, I turn the floor over to you.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Madam Golberg for her comments and for giving us a good overview of the action plan, what's happened, and the UN resolutions.

Because of our limited time, I'd like to get from her, or from anybody else who would like to add their comments on the different regions, what they see as some of the challenges in implementing this, in terms of the action plan, both on the issue of capacity-building and on the issue of some of the UN resolutions.

Finally, I realize there are some political overtones to the language of the words "failed state". It tends to be that in DFAIT we use the words "fragile state" a lot more, as opposed to "failed state". I guess you try to avoid saying failed state.

I'm curious to know why that is the case, given the fact that many other governments use the words failed state to describe certain countries, specifically Somalia and Afghanistan, but also some of the countries we're looking at where there are deeply concerning issues of both human rights violations and the lack of government ability to fully control certain regions.

So there are serious issues of concern, and I wanted to hear your opinions.

Those are my two questions for now.

•(1330)

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** Thank you very much.

I'll start with the second one first, since that's my area of responsibility within START.

In fact, there are very few countries now that we would refer to as "failed states". The preference internationally within the OECD

DAC and within the UN is to refer to countries that are "vulnerable", or "fragile", very much recognizing that different contexts require different kinds of approaches and that when we refer to them as fragile and vulnerable, these are countries that are least likely to be able to manage external or internal shocks as a result of armed violence or organized crime.

There's a whole complicated cocktail of reasons why a country may be vulnerable or fragile, and then it is incumbent on us to design our strategies to be able to address it effectively. So our preference is in fact to speak of them as vulnerable and fragile, because we think it more appropriately reflects the context those governments are facing. They may have an elected government, a strong national government, but they might not necessarily have control over a specific geographic area of their country. Therefore, we would say that they're fragile because there is internal unrest. A country might be very capable and strong but it may experience a catastrophic natural disaster, in which case then it becomes vulnerable. So it all depends on the context we're dealing with.

With respect to some of the challenges that we will face or that the international community faces, these are ones that you're very familiar with. Obviously, there are the country-specific challenges that depend on the context in which you're working. There are cultural and social issues that one has to grapple with and that one has to be very aware of when you're trying to engage in specific country situations. For us, there will be an issue of even just baselining our current approaches, to determine what we are already doing, then collecting all that information in one place, making sure we're very aware of how much of our programming, for instance, does take this into account, and doing it in a very systematic way. After making sure we have that, then we can measure how we're doing going forward.

As for challenges in capacity-building, again, it very much depends on the country that you're going to, and their level of awareness about these issues; then you'll design your capacity-building training and mentoring accordingly. Your mentoring and training in a place like Sudan is going to be very different from the mentoring and training we do in a place like Afghanistan, and that can be impacted for a whole variety of reasons. It depends on levels of literacy of the people you're training, and on the social and cultural context. Those are all the kinds of challenges we're dealing with.

At the international level, when you look back over the last 10 years from when 1325 was first adopted, you actually see a significant number of developments. You see the language being used increasingly. You see UN Security Council resolutions paying specific attention in the geographic context to the risks faced by women and girls. You see Security Council missions increasingly meeting specifically with women's organizations when they go on the ground. But there's still a gap between the aspirations that we as the international community have set out in the various women, peace, and security resolutions and our ability to actually implement them on the ground. Again, it's for a whole host of reasons, whether they're human resource, technical, socio-economic, or financial.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you.

I'd like to ask Ambassador Reeder a question about Haiti.

From what we've been hearing, and from what's been in the papers, specifically what's been happening on the ground, not just cholera but also the attacks on women, sexual violence, and everything else, it seems we're getting a sense of hopelessness from there on a daily basis. What is your read on the ground? Is that misguided? Is there hope that things will get better? It seems things are getting worse in that country.

**Mr. Neil Reeder (Director General, Latin America and Caribbean, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** I would say our impression was that Haiti was on a much more positive course in the past couple of years before the earthquake. The earthquake has left huge challenges for the country, a country that was already very fragile. We thought it was starting to turn a corner, and now it's been set back again by the consequences of the earthquake. There are 1.3 million people living in temporary shelter. This is a country with a GDP per capita of \$800 U.S. annually, so they face many challenges.

The international community, including the Canadian public, has contributed to a number of programs in Haiti and recognizes the challenges that are ahead. It's very difficult. We've also just gone through an electoral situation that wasn't perfect. Although we recognize that the OAS and the UN have said that, generally speaking, it was a fair and transparent process, we've encouraged them to pursue allegations of irregularities. We're hoping to go to a second round so that we can then move forward with the new government in February.

It's a very challenging situation, but Canada and the international community are very devoted to trying to assist Haiti. We can't let Haiti fail. We have to help it. Canadians have stepped up, the government has stepped up. The donor contributions are enormous, both in terms of humanitarian aid since the earthquake, the reconstruction fund under President Clinton and Mr. Bellerive, and of course our CIDA programming, which was extensive, over \$100 million per year before the earthquake.

So in fact we've done a lot. It's a difficult situation, but we can't give up hope. We have to keep working. The Haitian people have hope, and we have to work with them.

• (1335)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You have about one minute left, Mr. Silva.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** That's fine.

**The Chair:** That's fine? Okay.

[Translation]

Mr. Dorion, please.

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank Ms. Goldberg and the other witnesses for appearing today.

I have two questions, and I think they are both for Ms. Goldberg.

First of all, this subcommittee has not discussed, either today or recently, UN Women, an organization that has just been created. In the House, I recently expressed my surprise at the fact that Saudi Arabia is a member of that organization.

First of all, I would like to know what we should expect from that organization, to what extent Canada's action plan can be carried out, and how useful relations with UN Women could be in carrying out that action plan.

Secondly, I would like to point out that, very recently, when the plan was presented in front of this subcommittee, at least two witnesses alluded to certain gaps, even though they recognized that it is a step in the right direction. They talked about a lack of financial resources for implementing the plan, and the fact that no one had been designated to see to it that the actions it calls for are actually carried out. We don't know what financial resources have been made available to implement the plan. We would like to know that. We would also like to know who will be responsible for ensuring that it is carried out.

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** Thank you very much.

That's my job, in fact. Since every department is responsible for its own part of the action plan, my team and myself will be handling interdepartmental coordination. We have worked very closely with Canadian NGOs, and we would like to continue to do that. I noted that some witnesses had discussed that during your deliberations.

With respect to financial resources tied to the action plan, we are assuming that funds will be set aside for conflict and crisis situations. We have to use those funds where the peace and security of women are at stake. The plan provides a lasting strategic framework for programs and activities to which the Government of Canada is already devoting large sums of money. So, our job is to look at how those funds should be used and whether we are consistently thinking in terms of the peace and security of women.

Furthermore, it doesn't really matter that we are going through a period of budget austerity; the point of the plan is not really to secure new money. We want to use the plan to determine how Canada can respond to conflict or cases of fragility where the peace and security of women are at stake.

With respect to UN Women, I'm going to ask my colleague, James, to answer that question, since it falls within his responsibility.

• (1340)

**Mr. James Junke (Director, Human Rights Policy, Human Rights and Governance Policy Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** UN Women is an attempt to bring within one branch, under a single secretariat, all the various organizations within the United Nations system. As a function of the United Nations system, that structure will certainly be more effective. Ms. Bachelet, who was the President of Chile, is now in charge of UN Women. We are extremely pleased about that. She has a tremendous reputation and, based on our analysis, she is extremely proactive and efficient.

As regards the membership of Saudi Arabia, it was automatic because, at the international level, it is the largest developing country to be in a position to provide funding for UN Women. In cooperation with partner countries, notably the United States, the European Union, Australia and New Zealand, we succeeded in heading off Iran's membership. The result isn't perfect, but overall, we find the situation encouraging.

In terms of incorporating that into our national action plan, that is a good idea. Clearly, that should be considered.

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** I would just like to add that UN Women will be including issues related to the peace and security of women in its own action plan. We will be working with these people in New York to try and better understand how they would like to proceed. We will be seeking to ascertain whether this is one of UN Women's three or four priorities. Our colleagues are already addressing that issue with Ms. Bachelet and her colleagues in New York.

**The Chair:** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Jean Dorion:** The Pearson Centre for Peacekeeping and Peacebuild do work, at least partly, in the areas we discussed today. Yet we've been told that funding for these two organizations will be cut. Would you not agree that this move is a step in the wrong direction?

Am I right to assume that the strategy used to prevent Iran from becoming a member of UN Women was to replace that country with Saudi Arabia

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** The Pearson Centre for Peacekeeping and Peacebuild are two organizations that we work with. We work jointly on various projects. We will continue to work with them. I cannot comment on their overall budget, but I know that we are currently cooperating on several projects. The Pearson Centre has worked for us in Africa, providing training to African police officers. We have also worked with the Pearson Centre to provide training on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Sudan.

We are currently working with these organizations and will continue to do so. Mr. Junke will answer your question about UN Women.

•(1345)

**Mr. James Junke:** No. Iran was a candidate for the Asia region. We supported the candidacy of East Timor. So East Timor replaced Iran. Saudi Arabia is considered a donor country.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's all the time we have for that round.

We now go to Mr. Marston.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I had six months' experience in Saudi Arabia in the seventies—we can talk about that another time—and it's far from the country as portrayed.

If you saw a look of concern on my face, Ms. Golberg, when you were starting your testimony, I think I have to put it into context. We've sat on this committee and we've listened to testimony about the butchery of albinos. Recently we had testimony about “boy dance” in Afghanistan, where young boys are dressed as women and sold off to the highest bidder.

When you came in here, you obviously approached this from a very high level, and you were kind of parsing words at one point there. So at first I was kind of backing away from your testimony, to be very frank with you. And then you started talking more about what's happening on the ground.

I realize you have to deal with these things at a high level. We're talking about the rape of women and children, and how in countries this is being used as an ugly tool of war. It sounds from testimony as though this is spreading, in the African nations particularly.

But coming back to your Canadian action plan—and I may be mistaken in this—there are detractors of the government here who all the time will say that the dollars haven't been delivered through the action plan for Canada. I thought I heard something similar in what you said, that you're in the process of building a plan, but not too much is actually going out the door. Is that a failure of dollars? Again, in the testimony, someone was talking about being unaware of where the moneys are going to be, and wondering what the future budget will be since there's no indication.

How much faith do you have that you're going to be able to actually do some fairly significant things with this plan?

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** I would say a couple of things. First of all, I'm very aware of the seriousness of these issues, having myself served in a country where these issues are very much at the fore. Prior to taking on this assignment, I was the representative of Canada in Kandahar, and so I dealt with these issues on a daily basis.

Actually, we try to make sure we're addressing the issue of women, peace, and security at the global multilateral level—which is about setting norms and setting standards so that you can hold countries to account and you can help to establish best practice—and we also approach it in country-specific circumstances through our embassies and through specific activities in our work with international organizations and NGOs.

I didn't want to take up too much of the committee's time, but we do all kinds of specific things in countries. We support women's participation as mediators in peace processes. We make sure that women can participate in peace processes. We've been a strong advocate, for instance, for women's participation in both the DRC and in Sudan, in the Darfur peace processes.

We have provided resources to facilitate land-dispute mechanisms. One of the biggest issues that women often face in countries post-conflict and post-disaster is that they don't have land tenure rights. So we have very specific projects in a number of countries to try to help women deal with that.

SGBV investigation has been an important part of our activities in Afghanistan, in DRC, and in Colombia, for instance. In Colombia we've put a number of projects in place specifically to try to address issues of impunity, because these issues weren't being looked at.

So I could give you a whole list of things we do, but I totally agree with you; we are very much in the practical, very much with our sleeves rolled up, here in Ottawa, as are all of our colleagues around the world.

Am I confident that we'll be able to do something with the action plan? Yes, because we already are. What the action plan enables us to do, though, for the first time is to try to bring all this stuff together within one coherent plan. It sets out a list of priority activities that we're going to do. It helps us to establish the baseline for these things.

To go back to the question that Mr. Dorion asked about the finances, our starting point for this was to look at the fact that there is all of this money already being spent by Canada in situations of armed conflict and in humanitarian crises. Let's start with this: how do we make sure that the money that's already being spent has the lens of women, peace, and security being utilized? As we look at that, then we can determine whether or not there are additional needs in certain places.

Even for my own organization, I was looking at my figures over the last couple of months. I manage the global peace and security fund, and this past year—if you understand your interpretation of women, peace, and security—we've spent about \$32 million on projects that directly benefit women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Of that, \$1 million is spent specifically around Resolution 1325, and \$5.7 million is to address sexual and gender-based violence, but then the rest is for mainstreaming these issues.

• (1350)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** You've already succeeded in doing what I wanted you to do, which was to bring the context closer to the ground, because I want people listening your presentation to realize that you folks have a heart. There are many times that people in public service are just “number crunchers”; they're just this or they're just that. I was concerned, because I know of some of the activities and have heard of some.

One of the things you just mentioned, benchmarks, was the next point I was going to. In our discussions before at this committee, we've talked about nations that have poor human rights records and how we can improve that, and whether we could tie our CIDA funding or any moneys that we're investing in those countries to benchmarks. Particularly concerning was the “boy-dance” thing in Afghanistan, which we heard about. Here we are with our military fighting in that country, with all kinds of resources going there. How do we hold them accountable to us to do something to stop these kinds of horrific things—by tying our aid to it?

Of course, one person said, well, you know, we'll tell them that we'll remove our troops if they don't do this. But this is a long-time effort. This is a huge systemic cultural change.

I agree with you that your planning has to be for generations, not just years, because this cultural thing is in more than one or two countries. It is across the board.

So I was pleased to hear your response.

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** It is a real challenge. This is my day job. I work on this 24/7, dealing with issues of conflict and fragility, and there is a huge appetite and expectation in a 24/7 culture that you can change things instantaneously. For some of these issues, we are very much, as you say, sir, having to work on social change and cultural change. It can take a long time to do it, but it's also about working with these countries, working with governments at the national level, working with governments at the local level, working with civil society organizations.

Don, I think you wanted to add something as well.

**The Chair:** We're out of time here, Mr. Marston, so....

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Can I have ten seconds?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Thanks.

Rape is used as a tool of war. You mentioned that it was targeting women. I would suggest that it's targeting men, because in a society in which women are already demeaned, this destroys the women and thus destroys the society. And that's how they are getting at the men.

Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Marston.

We turn now to Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

How about I just pick up where Mr. Marston left off, with some accolades.

First off, I think you endure one of the things we're very familiar with. In other words, you're hearing of repeated incidents of human rights violations over and over again and are sometimes feeling very much constrained and muted by the inability to take action and save those people who are on death row in different countries or are being raped or are being persecuted in any number of ways. I commend you for being able to endure that, for having the patience with the United Nations, and for much more that you do on a day-to-day basis. I mean that most sincerely, and I'm glad that Mr. Marston brought it up first.

Also, as someone who tends to be conservative, I was very happy to hear that we want to see how we are spending our money in this regard before we add more resources, to make sure that we're spending in the most effective way. So I thank you for that, as well.

That actually answers one of my questions. We had two witnesses, Joanne Lebert and Kristine St-Pierre, who mentioned the fact that there were no funds appended to it. You answered that question quite well.

You mentioned something about gaps, which they talked about too. From what I got from their testimony, their concern wasn't so much about the existence of gaps as it was about going back to civil society again and getting more input to rejig the plan.

Do you have intentions to do that in the future?

• (1355)

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** Yes. In fact, our intent very much was to continue to work with civil society and to secure their input. Peacebuild was a partner for us as we were developing the action plan. They helped to facilitate consultations with Canadian civil society. We benefited from engaging with about 500 people across the country, and Peacebuild facilitated that. In fact, I'm currently in discussions with them on how we can take this forward. I'm confident that we'll be able to find a positive way to continue to work together.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Great.

I have one question of concern. I spent a number of years on the public accounts committee. One of the things we often found was that there would be an multi-department initiative, and nobody could ever be held to account, because it was the responsibility of each individual department to bring about this plan according to what they were responsible for. One of the things Madam Lebert and Ms. St-Pierre mentioned was the fact that, as they phrased it, they wanted a cabinet position for accountability.

For me, where does the buck stop? Is there going to be some mechanism for transparency in all the departments so that they have a report card, at least, that's specific, so that there's some accountability around the implementation of the plan?

**Ms. Elissa Golberg:** Each department, as you noted, is going to be responsible for following through. What we have done is that within the plan, we've specifically said that there'll be an annual report that will be issued publicly. First of all, there's nothing like a public report to ensure that people are following through on this. We'll be working interdepartmentally to make sure that people are establishing their baselines. That's going to take us some time, so we might not have it all by the first annual report that comes out. We're going to do our very best to make sure that those reports are not glossing over the challenges we're facing. I think if there's anything we've learned from our experiences, for instance with the quarterly reporting on Afghanistan, it is that the more transparent we are about the challenges we're facing, the better the dialogue we'll have with the public, NGOs, and parliamentarians about what it takes to implement things.

I think the annual public report we're going table will be one method of accountability. The other is that all of the ministers signed off on the action plan. So the ministers themselves have indicated that this is something they will pursue with their departments. I think that's an additional element of accountability.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Great.

On the level of execution of a plan, you said that for the first couple of years you're going to be aggregating some baseline data so you can develop some really substantive, practical, and realistic benchmarks. There will always be people—as you mentioned, Madam Golberg—who want immediate results. You just can't do that, especially in war-torn areas where there's no substantial civil society to speak of—no infrastructure in justice and security.

I'll leave this as a comment for myself, and you may want to comment on it. But I hope that when you start to develop the indicators or benchmarks—whatever term you want to use—they will be more focused on results, even if they're modest. We understand what you have to work with. Rather than a report on the actions you did, what are the results on the ground, as Mr. Marston was saying, that all of these initiatives and actions are equated to?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You still have a bit of time left, Mr. Sweet. Is there anything else you want to comment on?

**Mr. David Sweet:** That's great, Mr. Chairman.

If I have more time, I would like to direct a question on Afghanistan.

We had a witness here in our lasting meeting, Reverend Majed El Shafie, who talked about some terrible persecution. Boy enslavement was one of them, and of course the persecution of women. Perhaps you could comment on that.

I specifically want to address the systematic persecution for Christian conversion, which he mentioned was quite serious. In fact, presently there are those who are jailed for that.

What are we doing in that regard?

• (1400)

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk (Director, Policy and Advocacy Division, Afghanistan Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** On the persecution of Christians—

**Mr. David Sweet:** Or you can talk about any of those three categories.

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk:** Well, *bacha bazi* was raised a couple of times by Mr. Marston, so I can address that.

Certainly the rights of children are a priority for Canada. One of our four priorities post-2011 will be investing in the future of Afghan children and youth. With regard to *bacha bazi*, sexual abuse of children, it is presently unlawful under the Afghan penal law under the juvenile code. We are very active in working with the Afghan government, justice institutions, and our partners to make sure it's part of the penal code that is being developed right now.

We have seen the Afghan government enact a number of laws addressing the rights of the child, but—

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Silva was there, and one of the interesting things he said about his meeting with the Afghan officials was that, with regard to conversion to Christianity, they were willing to talk about any aspect, but with regard to this one issue, they refused to even speak about it.

Are we pressing them in this regard, to deal with that?

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk:** With regard to religious freedom, we are indeed. On the instruction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canadian officials have expressed our concern to the Afghan ambassador here regarding respect for religious freedom in Afghanistan, which has deteriorated, in particular for Christian groups and individuals.

We continue to look to the Afghan government to uphold their constitution and the constitutional rights of its citizens.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Chair, as a point of clarification, “religious freedom” is not the proper term. The idea of religious freedom, they believe, is that if you're a Muslim you're a Muslim, and that if you're a Christian you're a Christian—or whatever religion you are. It's the idea of conversion: that's the problem.

If you talk to them about it, they will say that they respect religious freedom. It's the idea of conversion that is not tolerated or respected. They don't even want to talk about it.

So we have to get to the issue of conversion, or what they call apostasy. That's the issue that needs to be raised, not religious freedom; they will say they're all for it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Did you have a response to that, Mr. Norfolk?

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk:** No. I believe this might be raised in the context of one of the particular issues going on right now, the case of Said Musa. That's being monitored extremely closely.

**The Chair:** At the last meeting, our witness, Reverend El Shafie, gave us a document that we're in the process of getting translated. It indicates that a group of around 25 recent converts from Islam to

Christianity—I think I'm right—were suffering from having been arrested, and were facing prosecution and trial.

Are you aware of that? Is it within your power to engage in some form of intervention or protest if that seems appropriate?

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk:** I'm not personally aware of that particular case. Certainly in terms of Afghanistan signing on to various international covenants and conventions regarding the freedom of choice, freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, freedom of religion....

Oh, I stand corrected; I was not personally aware of it, but my colleague is. That particular case has been raised with officials in Kabul with Afghan officials.

But certainly, yes, indeed we are, because Afghanistan has acceded to various international covenants and conventions. We have that ability, as we do with this action plan as well, in terms of approaching them on their commitments, so holding them to their commitments under their international obligations.

**The Chair:** I see. So the commitments are not merely under the Afghan constitution but under documents and treaties they've signed on to, effectively?

**Mr. Adrian Norfolk:** Exactly—including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but in terms of the covenant on civil and political rights.

•(1405)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. We are very grateful indeed that you were able to take the time and that so many of you could come and give us such fulsome answers.

Witnesses, you are free to leave, with our thanks.

I do have one item of unrelated committee business that I want to address now with the members of the committee.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]









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