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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, December 9, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Scott Reid**



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

Thursday, December 9, 2010

• (1305)

[Translation]

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

This is the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today, December 9, 2010, is our 38th meeting.

[English]

We are continuing our study into the treatment of sexual minorities in Uganda.

We are very happy today to have as our witnesses two officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. They are Rénaud Gilbert, who is the director general for the international region, and Debra Pressé, who is the acting director general for refugee affairs.

I'm sure our clerk has already briefed you about how these things work, and for all I know you are very experienced parliamentary committee attendees. I see one head shaking. Practice makes perfect, and you'll soon be able to do this sort of thing in your sleep.

At any rate, we are very interested to hear what you have to say. I invite you to begin your presentation.

Thank you.

**Ms. Debra Pressé (Acting Director General, Refugee Affairs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you've noted, my name is Debra Pressé and I am the acting director general for the refugee affairs branch at Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

[Translation]

Joining me today is Rénaud Gilbert, Director General of CIC's International region.

Today I will focus my remarks on refugee criteria issues related to this subcommittee's study of the treatment of sexual minorities in Uganda.

[English]

Mr. Chair, Canada currently resettles between 10,000 and 12,000 refugees from abroad every year. As part of the reforms to our

refugee system, this number will increase over the next two to three years to be in the range of 12,000 to 14,500 refugees per year.

The resettlement process begins with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We call it the UNHCR. The UNHCR has the international mandate to identify and provide protection to refugees.

In Canada, private sponsors may also identify refugees whom they are willing and able to support.

Canada's definitions for who is eligible for protection through resettlement are found in our Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations. The legislation provides for three classes of refugees for the purposes of resettlement. One of the classes is the Convention refugee abroad class, which mirrors the 1951 convention definition.

As you know, a refugee by definition is someone who is outside the country of origin and who cannot return, or is unable to return, because of a well-founded fear that he or she will be persecuted upon return to the country of origin. This could be because of race, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

It should be noted, Mr. Chair, that the definition of a convention refugee does not include gender or sexual orientation as an independently enumerated ground for a well-founded fear of persecution. However, there is a growing body of international jurisprudence that recognizes that persecution based on gender or sexual orientation should be considered persecution based on membership in a particular social group, and the UNHCR does in fact refer persons in this group to Canada for resettlement.

The other two classes of refugees in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations are the country of asylum class and the source country class, and both provide for slightly broader definitions than the 1951 convention.

The country of asylum class is intended to allow protection to persons who have left the country of origin and cannot return because they were seriously impacted in their country and continue to be seriously impacted outside. That impact is because of civil war or armed conflict or because of ongoing suffering of gross violations of human rights.

The source country class is unique in that it addresses people who are still in their country of origin and who would meet the convention refugee definition if they were able to leave. It also addresses people who are either personally impacted by civil war or are suffering a serious deprivation of human rights and have been detained or imprisoned as a consequence of that. The source country class is open only to persons residing in their country of citizenship or habitual residence, and only when that country is listed in schedule 2 of the regulations. To be listed in the regulations, the country itself must be one where the general population is in a refugee-like situation because of civil war or armed conflict.

In all three refugee definitions, the person must have no possibility of another durable solution within a reasonable period of time.

The source country list as a tool, we will acknowledge, is not particularly flexible. It is based in regulation. It currently lists six countries, some of which are not even in a refugee-like situation anymore. The six countries today are Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Sierra Leone.

Mr. Chair, the committee has also asked that we explain the urgent protection and group resettlement programs.

Canada and the several other countries that engage in resettlement have formal arrangements in place with the UNHCR whereby we agree to accept a certain number of emergency referrals on an annual basis. These referrals are restricted to refugees who are facing a real and immediate threat to their life, liberty, or physical safety.

Group resettlement, or group processing, as we call it, is an administrative arrangement that we have developed with the UNHCR to allow us to more efficiently move large numbers of persons out of a specific refugee camp.

I want to turn now to the issue of sexual minorities. Currently, as far as we know, about 86 countries, or nearly one-third of all nations on earth, still have a total ban on male homosexuality. A smaller number also ban sex between women.

The penalties in these countries range from a few years in jail to life imprisonment. In a small number of places, the sentence is death.

• (1310)

[Translation]

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has been vocal in expressing his concern about the treatment of and precarious situation for sexual minorities.

This summer, when he toured the country to promote the private sponsorship of refugees program, he encouraged organizations and individuals to sponsor persons, including Iranians, who have been forced to flee persecution based on their sexual orientation.

[English]

This program, the private sponsorship of refugees program, is a key component of Canada's refugee resettlement program whereby Canadian citizens and permanent residents can come together to sponsor refugees living abroad and help them find protection and build a new life in Canada.

In closing, I would mention that our visa office in Nairobi has a total of 10 applications for resettlement, in both our government and private sponsorship programs, in process from nationals of Uganda. None of the 10 persons has claimed to be persecuted on the basis of sexual orientation.

I would also mention that Canada's resettlement program is global. Our officers go into more than 40 countries a year to interview refugees from over 60 nationalities.

There is no limit to the number of immigration applications people can submit to Canada. This means that today in our Nairobi mission, which serves over a dozen countries in Africa, we have over 7,000 person applications from private sponsors alone waiting for their turn.

[Translation]

Thank you.

We are ready now to answer any questions the committee may have.

[English]

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

Mr. Gilbert, are you going to make a separate presentation?

**Mr. Rénaud Gilbert (Director General, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** No, I don't have a presentation per se. I'm mostly here to answer questions that relate to the operation on the ground. If there are some, I'll be pleased to do so.

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

I want to wrap things up earlier than usual because of a couple of items we have to discuss under the heading of committee business.

I'm suggesting we wrap this up at about 10 minutes to the hour. That means we have 40 minutes, which means we have, given that this is a very concise presentation—not all of our presenters are concise, trust me—10 minutes per round.

We will begin with the Liberals.

Mr. Silva, please go ahead.

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

Thank you for your presentation. First of all, I want to get on the record whether you have read the pertinent testimony from an earlier meeting.

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** Yes, I have, if you're referring to the testimony from November 4, I believe it was.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Several recommendations were made in terms of the processing and the problems of red tape, the bureaucracy, the difficulty of getting that information to the membership, and even managing to go into Kenya. Is there anything you could do so that we can help them and their organization with the process of facilitating?

**Mr. Rénaud Gilbert:** First of all, we'd have to see whether they qualify to submit an application. As mentioned earlier by my colleagues, we don't have any application from that group currently.

We're essentially waiting to see how they could submit an application. In order to qualify as refugees, they have to be outside of Uganda, and we don't have a system to help people move outside of the country. That's not our mandate, either.

• (1315)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** I understand that you may have your mandate, but given that we know from witnesses on the ground and from media reports that gays and lesbians in Uganda are being targeted.... There is also a punitive law in the works that has generally wide support as well. It is a law that, if it were to go through, would provide the death penalty for anybody who has been caught doing any type of gay act. This is a life-and-death situation.

To get to the nearest place, which would be Nairobi, has its challenges as well. Also, as you will have been aware, the comments lately coming out of Kenya have not been very favourable to gays and lesbians. You're going from one country that has a serious problem—possibly arresting, charging, and hanging people and putting the death penalty on them—to another country that doesn't have a very stellar record.

What is it that you can do in maybe working with UNHCR or some NGOs?

You're obviously aware of the issue. You can't not be aware of what's happening on the ground. What are we prepared to do to facilitate and help out? Are the forms that complicated? Is it access to get them, to get to people, to know what's happening?

I don't know. It seems like a very frustrating situation, and for us to say there's nothing we can do about it is even more depressing.

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** We'll acknowledge that the forms are quite lengthy and complicated. Most persons do, in fact, require some assistance to complete the forms. We don't know the identity of the person who testified, but certainly we could put people into contact. We do have an organization that does assist people in Canada. It's called the refugee sponsorship training program, and certainly we could put persons in touch with that organization. It's a non-governmental organization that assists persons in understanding the forms and getting them filled out, etc. They also assist persons in finding or understanding the private sponsorship program.

The legislative framework right now is such that persons who want to knock on the door need to have someone knock on the door on their behalf, either a private sponsor or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I know that when I read the text, he was talking about the application itself being difficult to go through, so we could certainly put the group in touch with the refugee sponsorship training program.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Would you be prepared to maybe cooperate with our office? If we were to have a workshop session at the 519 Church Street community centre in Toronto, would you be prepared to lend some of your officials to come there and speak to some of the individuals about what they could do to assist the Ugandan pride committee?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** Certainly. That's part of our day-to-day business. Our staff in the Ontario region—

**Mr. Mario Silva:** You would be prepared to do that. Okay. I will contact them and let them know that you were friendly towards

doing that, and then I will see if we can maybe set up a meeting in the new year.

I think all of us are very concerned. It's one of the reasons we're discussing this issue here at our committee. I think we're trying to figure out what avenues we could take and what processes we could put in place to help out.

I think you're also doing some work in relation to gays and lesbians fleeing from Iran. They're going to Turkey. That's also a community that is very much being persecuted by the Iranian government. They are going to Turkey, and I hear that UNHCR there has been very helpful in working with the Canadian officials to expedite their coming to Canada.

Could a similar model be followed in Nairobi?

**Mr. Rénaud Gilbert:** That model could be adopted, because someone can actually apply and be accepted as a refugee if they meet the criteria for refugees. That would be a situation like that. The difference between the two has to do with where the person is physically located. In the case of an Iranian, there is a sponsoring group that has approached us. It is a bit similar to the group that we were discussing a little earlier.

In terms of helping a number of people, once they identify individuals, if the individuals are outside of their country, the current legislation allows us to then process the applications of those individuals.

• (1320)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** This is the final thing. I don't know what type of auditing you do involving your staff on the ground. I ask that question because we have done this for a very long time to save on costs. Unlike the U.S. or other countries, we tend to contract a lot of local people, and these people deal first-hand with the issue. It may not be the visa official, but it might be the person who takes the notes or the person at reception.

I want to make sure that the people we're hiring on the ground are fully aware of the Canadian laws with respect to gender equality and issues of sexual orientation. Do we have proper auditing of these individuals to make sure there is no cultural bias towards those particular groups and to make sure people have proper training?

**Mr. Rénaud Gilbert:** First of all, I should clarify that currently the officers who interview refugees in Nairobi—there are three of them—are all Canadian-based. We do have locally engaged staff who do a lot of the administrative work. That's true. They are trained and know they are working for the Government of Canada, as I am. They've been trained. Many of them have worked in a Canadian work environment for an extended period of time, so they are familiar.

It's hard for me to comment on what they could do if they didn't like one particular kind of applicant versus another. That would be highly unusual. We have staff who are themselves members of that same sexual-orientation group who are working there. It's not the first time. It's not unusual, either. There is not much I can add.

I read the comments from a previous witness who commented differently, but I can only firmly disagree with that view.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you. That's what I wanted to know.

We were quite prepared to have your staff meet with the group, and I'll speak to them about setting something up. I think that the testimony we've heard is of concern. We've been instructed to do whatever we can and make sure we work with the different departments to see what we can do to help them out. I don't know if you have any concrete suggestions.

I know that in Turkey there is a UN agency on the ground to help with the Iranians, but there's nothing like that in Nairobi, is there?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** The UN has a strong presence in Kenya and in all the neighbouring countries. We accept over 2,000 refugees in the office in Nairobi, and the majority of them have—

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Are we working together?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** Yes, we see them on a daily basis.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Is there a number we accept every year from the UNHCR-designated refugees?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** The government-sponsored refugees form a separate category, sponsored by the Government of Canada. Each year there are over 7,000, and the vast majority are referred by the UNHCR.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** I suppose the government could decide, given what's taken place in Uganda, that we need a priority for those refugees in Nairobi.

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** That would be a policy choice.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Yes, but they could make that choice. That's what I wanted to establish.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Deschamps, please go ahead.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon and welcome.

For a few weeks now, we have been looking into how sexual minorities are being treated. I am obviously wondering about something. Perhaps you could help me out.

To help this minority and since it is related to the immigration system, wouldn't it be more appropriate to refer this matter for study to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which might be able to provide more practical solutions for what these people are currently experiencing?

•(1325)

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** To be honest, I am not really in a position to answer that question. I agree with you, but we are not the ones who actually chose the committee.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** No. That's how I see it at the moment. The matter was referred to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, but I am wondering whether the study wouldn't have more weight if it was done by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** You make a very good point. You are pointing out that the committee that addresses immigration issues also deals with all the other questions, of course.

When a particular group is targeted, we have to look at the impact on the other groups. When we talk about priority, we always mean priority in relation to other groups.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Ms. Pressé, these thoughts came to me while reading your presentation. At the outset, you said that Canada currently resettles between 10,000 and 12,000 refugees from abroad. You said you are expecting the number of refugees to increase significantly. This number will go from 12,000 to 14,500 per year, as a result of the reform to our refugee system.

Could you specify which reform you are referring to in your presentation? Is it because there are more and more applications?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** That's a very good question.

[English]

The Balanced Refugee Reform Act, which received royal assent last June, was tied to an increase in the number of resettled refugees that Canada would take. That is being rolled out over a three-year period. As a result the government-assisted refugee number, which up to now had been 7,300 to 7,500, will increase to 8,000 refugees a year. We also received the funding required to increase the program for private sponsorship of refugees program by another 2,000 refugees a year, so the increase is tied to the Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** You've mentioned that Canada helped 10,000 to 12,000 refugees to settle in the country. Would you be able to tell me approximately where most of these people are from? Africa? Asia?

[English]

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** It's a global program. Last year we took refugees from about 70 different nationalities, but the top source countries for the last several years have been fairly stable.

Afghanistan is one of the top source countries. Colombia has been one of the top source countries. Iraq is certainly a top source country now for us. As well, we are taking a significant number of Bhutanese refugees out of Nepal. The African countries of Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia have been top source countries for many, many years.

It's about 30%, *grosso modo*, from Africa, 30% from Asia, and 30% from the Middle East.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** You also talk about the list of source countries. I am not very familiar with this jargon. Could you tell me how often the department goes over this list of source countries?

You tell us that, at the moment, six countries no longer correspond to the previous definition. You mentioned some countries that requested us to take refugees. Is Afghanistan, for example, on the list of source countries?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** That's a very good question.

[English]

As I acknowledged in my opening remarks, the tool has not been as flexible as we had hoped it would be when the class was created in 1998. The list has not been reviewed on a very regular basis. The last time it was reviewed was in 2003, and there were no changes made to it.

The regulations stipulate that to be on the list, a country has to be in a situation in which the entire country is a refugee-like situation. Also, to be on the list, the country has to be—and this is the paradox, even though it's in a refugee-like situation with a civil war and armed conflict going on—safe enough for Canadian immigration officials to go in there and work on a routine basis without putting either themselves or the people they're trying to help at risk. There are very few countries in the world that meet those criteria. It also has to be a country that wouldn't undermine our broader government agenda strategies within the United Nations.

Afghanistan is not on the list because Canadians can't routinely work in Afghanistan and Iraq is not on the list because Canadians cannot go into Iraq, yet those are countries that, at first blush, would appear to have one of our largest refugee populations.

It has been difficult to change the list. It does require cabinet approval. It goes through the regulatory process and therefore requires several government departments to agree. There's a broad consultation. Quite frankly, there are countries on the list now that we know could come off, but we don't want to waste the valuable time of members of parliament by taking countries off when we couldn't add any new countries to the list because the countries that people would want to add today are not countries that we can operate in.

• (1330)

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Would you like to add anything else, Mr. Gilbert?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** No, that's okay.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** The list has not been edited since 2003. But you must prepare periodic reports or statements. I imagine you must be making recommendations annually to the minister in office on reviewing that list. It is quite a restrictive tool and it could turn into a source of irritation rather than a solution.

[English]

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** Bureaucrats review and then make recommendations, and, of course, those recommendations are in the purview of cabinet confidentiality.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** At the end of your presentation, you said that in your Nairobi mission, which serves a dozen countries in Africa—I think that's a lot—7,000 applications are still waiting their turn. A lawyer who came to testify last week, if I remember correctly, told us that the process was very long and that an individual had to wait practically 48 months to go through the whole bureaucratic maze.

But then we were given the example of the mission in Damascus, which serves fewer countries, but is able to process some applications more quickly.

Isn't the problem the lack of means, resources and funding? If we added those elements to the mission in Nairobi, for example, we could be more optimistic about processing more applications and doing so faster. We would allow more applicants to be heard and received.

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** My answer has two parts.

First, it is a matter of resources. So, this year, in 2010, we provided additional resources to the mission in Nairobi. We sent seven additional people to help with the mission on site, mostly because of the large area to be covered, but that's not the only reason. We actually receive more applications in China in a month than we receive in all of Africa in a year. So it's not really the territory that is the problem, but the communication process, which is often difficult. In offices like those in Nairobi—it's not the only place experiencing this—we need more staff to process the same number of applications. So that answers one part of the question.

I believe my colleague has already addressed the second part of the question. A set number of refugees is accepted each year. So the fact that we have more or less staff members does not make a big difference at the end of the day. If we are asked to take care of 2,000 refugees in a year, that's exactly what we'll do. If we were to move resources, for example, from Damascus to Nairobi, we would also have to change the number of refugees that we accept in the two places.

So that somewhat explains the 50-month wait time. It's not that it actually takes 50 months, but there's already a huge waiting list and we are processing the applications that were submitted earlier.

• (1335)

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

We will now go to Mr. Marston.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Thank you for attending today.

I really appreciate the fact that both of you took the time to read the testimony from the particular individual that we're avoiding naming because there was a sense of desperation there. It's quite evident in the testimony. The person was looking for any and all options.

You mentioned in your remarks that generally internally displaced people are not addressed. It's the people who manage to get out of a country. Are we legislatively prohibited from doing that? Am I understanding that correctly, or is it a policy?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** The definition of a refugee is someone who is outside of their country of origin and who can't return because of the persecution. We do have the source country class that was meant to be, as I said, more responsive to allow for that type of response. It has not proven to be as flexible.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** According to the witness we had here, there are 200 people, basically, who have been named and put into this very perilous.... Many of them are people of means. Often in dealing with refugees, especially from countries that are at war or in severe turmoil, you don't have that option that they have means at all.

Apparently this individual seems to think that most of them do. He made the offer in the testimony to somehow insert himself into the process. When you looked at that part of the testimony, was there any chance for that option? Might there be a way that he could insert himself in where we're not allowed? I doubt it, but it's worth the question, I suppose.

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** The legislative framework allows the minister to enter into agreements with other organizations for the purpose of identifying refugees through a private sponsorship organization or through another organization that will only identify, as opposed to providing sponsorship support, so that avenue is there for the minister to choose to enter into an agreement with an organization. The minister will want to enter into an agreement, according to the regulations, with an organization that has very real, concrete knowledge on the ground and is able to actually identify persons, but it comes back to the person needing to meet the refugee definition. If you're still in Uganda, you don't meet the refugee definition.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** He proposed that they could get into a neighbouring area. As you would have noted in the testimony, he was concerned about the native people in Nairobi, and that some of those people wouldn't feel safe going there in the first place. Your response sounded much different from his perspective on it. Of course, when a person is working in fear, that kind of thing builds along with it.

I think we have to back up a little here. How would this individual go about trying to classify their organization such that the minister could look at it and give it some consideration? Is there anything that this committee could do to facilitate that, or could we direct the person to someone in your office?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** The easiest way would be for the person to express in writing to the minister that they would like the organization to become a referral organization on behalf of refugees they want to identify.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** What does Canada as a country think of resettlement as a durable solution in situations like this, with 200 individuals in sexual minorities, in particular, in Uganda? Is group resettlement a possibility here?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** Group resettlement is an administrative operation we put in place with the UNHCR when we're talking about large numbers of people from a specific camp. I'll use the Bhutanese as an example.

It's something we've only ever done with other countries; it's not something we do alone. Eight countries decided to remove close to 70,000 of the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees that had been living in a specific camp since 1990. The Bhutanese all left Bhutan at the same time for the same reason, all ended up in the same place in Nepal, and all stayed there. There had been no movement in and out.

Under normal circumstances the UNHCR or a private sponsor provides us with a very long form—20 to 30 pages—on the refugee's story. With group resettlement, we told the UNHCR we would take 5,000 of those 70,000. Rather than asking them to give us 5,000 forms of 30 pages each, because we knew the 5,000 were part of a complete, comprehensive census and we had received the complete census, we asked for a shorter form.

Instead of going to the camps in Nepal two to four times a year to do a few at a time, Canada goes in once a year to interview 1,000 people at a time with these shorter forms. The arrivals are staggered. It's not faster; it's just a way to use our resources more effectively. Eight countries are in the camp, and we can't all use the generators at the same time, so we take turns going in.

With regard to the 200 Ugandans, group resettlement is something we use when we have an identified group. We have physical identification. We know who they are and where they are, and nobody else is going to pretend to be those people. When we don't know where they are....

• (1340)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Yes, I see. We have limitations. The witness himself said he had difficulty deciding where some of them were and whether he could actually go back to contact them. He said that 200, if I recall correctly, had been in contact with him, but had dispersed to some degree internally. Very few got out.

We can see the problems. You mentioned earlier that Canada really hasn't accepted sexual orientation to the same degree as other—

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** No, no. Canada is one of the few countries that recognizes sexual orientation as being grounds for persecution. That applies to both our domestic asylum system and to resettlement.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Oh, good. I misunderstood. I'm quite pleased I misunderstood; I'm not quite sure how that happened, but I'm glad you clarified it for us.

I think I must be nearly out of my time, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have two minutes and 40 seconds left.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Again, is there any real prospect of the urgent protection program being used in this case?

**Ms. Debra Pressé:** There are only about 20 countries that do resettlement in the world on a regular basis. About another dozen do it sometimes, on a non-predictable basis. Among the 20 countries, some of us have a formal arrangement with the United Nations wherein we agree to consider a certain number of people for emergency resettlement.

The UNHCR is caring for well over 10 million refugees. They refer between 80,000 to 100,000 refugees a year to the 20 countries who do resettlement, and out of those 80,000 to 100,000, they refer maybe about 300 as truly urgent. Canada has an arrangement whereby we will take up to 100 of those 300 to 400 urgent referrals. There are about four or five other countries that also have that.



So is it possible? Yes, we take referrals from the UNHCR for urgent protection, because it means that you are receiving specific people. It's a very complicated chain. You're talking about getting somebody out of a country very quickly in a few days. There are phone calls. It's a chain of command that goes from the country to us, to our doctors, to make sure the person is physically removed. We have an arrangement with our Canada Border Services Agency. That's where we come up with the number of 100 a year, because we can't tell Canada Border Services Agency to stop all of the hundreds of thousands of things they're doing.

It's a successful program. We are able to take people out within days or weeks, as opposed to months, but again it's a protocol that we have in place with the UNHCR.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I take your point, your reaction to the sexual orientation thing. This is new on the horizon, in a sense. In the world there are very few countries that even consider it, which means that the systemic applications needed to ensure that it happens in a smooth way haven't really had time to evolve. What you've just described might...

Again, you must have the UNHCR involved and you have to go through the process. Hopefully all this will filter down to this

individual and there may be an opportunity, but there's a long list of folks here, as it's easy to see.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1345)

**The Chair:** Thank you. That was remarkably well timed. You had nine seconds left.

We turn now to the Conservative members.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Chair, for time's sake, I'll just allow us to go to business. I believe my colleague needs to get to the House.

**The Chair:** That's right. He has already run that by me. He has a motion he wants to present when we go in camera.

We thank our witnesses very much for coming here. You've been very helpful to us in what I think is quite an important matter.

As for the rest of us, we are going to go in camera to deal with committee business, so we'll suspend for a moment.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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