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Chair

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld

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• (1305)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Welcome, everybody. This is our second session of this year's Iran Accountability Week, a week that we've been holding through the human rights subcommittee since 2012. It's a week where we can bring in people who are able to speak about the human rights situation in Iran and provide a platform for those who are defending human rights.

Today we have four witnesses. We have, in person, Maryam Shafipour. She is an Iranian human rights defender who was sentenced to seven years in prison based on false charges, and she has been advocating since then for the release of political prisoners and for the rights of students. She was released in 2015 and is now working very hard to secure the release of other prisoners of conscience in Iran.

We also have, by video conference from Toronto, Raheel Raza, who is President of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow and the author of the book, *Their Jihad...Not My Jihad!*

We also have Ladan Boroumand, who is coming to us by video conference from Washington, D.C. Ladan Boroumand is Co-Founder of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for the promotion of human rights and democracy in Iran. That centre carries an online database that memorializes nearly 25,000 victims of state violence perpetrated by the Iranian government.

I am also proud to say that alongside me, she is also a member of the steering committee of the World Movement for Democracy.

Welcome to all the witnesses. Because we are tight for time—we have less than an hour—I will ask you to keep your remarks to less than eight minutes each. We will follow with one short round of questions, in which each side can ask just one short question.

We will begin with Ms. Shafipour, who is here in person. You have eight minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Maryam Shafipour (As an Individual): Thank you to the Parliament of Canada for inviting me. I'm prepared to talk in Persian.

[Witness spoke in Farsi, interpreted as follows:]

I would like to use this opportunity that's been given to me to thank the Canadian Parliament, from the bottom of my heart, for the

support and special attention that's been given regarding human rights violations. While I was in jail there, Amnesty Canada's campaign enabled me to get out of jail within two years. I want to say that this support was very effective.

Universities in Iran are a threat to the authorities of the Islamic Republic. They look at students as a threat. For students who want to attend university, this could be a pathway to jail. If you don't behave as they expect, and if you're deemed to be independent, that is sufficient for that to happen.

When I was 22 years old, I was summoned to court. I was convicted to serve one year in jail, and I was told I would not be able to continue my education for the rest of my life, except for peaceful, regular university activities. If students do similar things in Canada, I'm sure you encourage them. If we do that in Iran, we are denied our rights.

Two years after the cultural revolution, thousands of students were prevented from continuing their education. Teachers and professors were not allowed to continue teaching at the university.

I went to the university. I did not expect to be prevented from continuing my education forever. Then I was arrested a second time, in 2013. I was put in solitary confinement for 65 days, in a very terrible situation in terms of hygiene and psychological pressure. Because of the experiences I had there, after one year of being denied medical treatment on the orders of the judicial authorities, I'm still suffering from diseases I was afflicted with while I was in solitary confinement. I am not the only person it happened to. Narges Mohammadi had a lot of medical issues in jail and remains in jail, and there are many others. Unfortunately, the denial of medical treatment continues.

Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi, who is a representative of the prosecutor general of Tehran, one of the 19 people, laughed at me because I was in pain and suffering from disease. He asked, "Do you think you will get out of this place alive?" Unfortunately, this process stays with you for the rest of your life, through the pressures on your family and the psychological damage you receive.

Judge Salavati, another of the 19 people on whom the Government of Canada is requested to place sanctions, was my judge. He was the person who sentenced me to jail for seven years. He asked my lawyer to sit behind me, so that I could not see his eyes and facial indications, even to get the slightest help. My lawyer, Amir Salar Davoodi, has been in jail for over six months, in solitary confinement, for the charge of collaboration with enemy countries.

I think that the country could be free, could be saved from the crises that it is involved in, as long as the facilities....

In Iran, the judiciary system is a tool for suppression, for oppression. I can tell you about Judge Salavati and my eight-hour session before his court. I was interrogated by a professional interrogator. He threatened me, saying that any vote could be issued against me because I threatened the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

From the first day after the revolution until now, thousands of people have been killed in Iran for their political opinions or their religious and ethnic views. In the 1980s thousands of people were executed, and last week was the anniversary of the execution of five Kurdish prisoners. Not only were the bodies of these individuals not given back to the family, but after 10 years they have not even allowed the families to know where the bodies are buried.

The mass burials we hear about in Syria and the mass executions of Bashar al-Assad's government or Daesh are bad memories of the Iranian people who were killed for their opinions 40 years ago. Families have even been denied the right to mourn for their families.

The other thing that I might emphasize about the Islamic Republic is that prisoners and their families are always punished together. Under the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, EIKO, from the beginning of the Islamic Revolution 40 years ago, the properties of the victims—Baha'is, ethnic minorities, religious minorities—have been seized and confiscated. Recently the houses and the stores of a couple with a 15-year conviction were confiscated and the children left without proper guardians. This happened because of the opinions they expressed.

Thank you.

• (1310)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your courage, and as a committee we are also very glad that you are able to be here to speak about this in a way that will shed light on it.

Ms. Maryam Shafipour: Thank you so much.

The Chair: We will now have the first witness by video conference. Raheel Raza, you have eight minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Raheel Raza (President, Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow): Thank you.

This week marks the seventh annual Iran Accountability Week held in Ottawa. I would like to thank Canada's former minister of justice, the Honourable Irwin Cotler, and all the MPs who have organized and supported these efforts.

Over the last seven years, parliamentary committees have heard a great deal of testimony from victims of the Iranian regime. These testimonies have only confirmed, in no uncertain terms, that Iran is one of the most malevolent players in the international community.

The regime is the globe's leading state sponsor of terrorism and home to thousands of the most egregious human rights violators on the planet. It has been directly complicit in President al-Assad's slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, has executed and tortured tens of thousands of its own citizens, and continues to plan bombings and assassinations in western countries. Iran also remains

a global leader in the execution of minors and is responsible for the arrest, torture and murder of Canadian citizens.

Over the last week, you have heard testimony from several extraordinarily courageous women from Iran who have been at the forefront of confronting this regime.

I have come here today to try to reinforce their message. I am an individual who has worked with women's groups across the globe in battling for the rights of women who have suffered from Islamist extremism.

Unlike their western counterparts, these women are not fighting for inclusiveness or fairness, but for their lives—and for the most basic of rights related to the word “human”.

Last year, in an article I co-authored with Danny Eisen of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, or C-CAT, we pondered what the #MeToo movement, so popular in the west, might mean in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I quote:

#MeToo — I too am one of thousands of Iranian women who have been raped by the regime's prison personnel with the consent of government authorities.

#MeToo — I too am one of the thousands of Iranian women who have had the skin torn from my back by floggings for supposed crimes of "inappropriate" behavior.

#MeToo — I too am an Iranian woman or girl who can be murdered by male relatives with almost complete impunity under Iranian law.

These women who have appeared before you have clearly displayed the dignity that the Canadian government's feminist international assistance policy has specifically identified as a goal for the women across the globe it aims to help. I believe Canada should now display the same conviction.

In this regard, I concur with Senator Housakos, who stated last week that Iran Accountability Week isn't just about holding Iran accountable; it's also about our own accountability. The senator, to my mind, is entirely correct.

While Parliament is to be fully commended for enabling these women to publicly expose the cruelties of the Iranian regime, emphatically hearing those narratives without taking concrete action to address them cannot be construed as holding this regime accountable. Nor can we honestly declare that in failing to do so, we have upheld the highest standards of our own publicly stated convictions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been brutally consistent, at great financial and political cost to the regime, in pursuing its publicly stated values of crushing minorities, executing minors and promoting terror across the globe. We must be no less diligent than the regime in following through on our stated commitments.

In its departmental plan of 2018-19, Global Affairs Canada publicly committed to hold Iran to account for human rights violations and to implement robust sanctions against the regime. However, despite Tehran's global web of malevolent activities and its standing as a leading human rights violator, not a single regime offender has been subject to Canada's Magnitsky sanctions. This includes those identified by the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights as having been involved in arrest, torture and murder of Canadians.

Why has Canada listed Venezuelan, Russian, Burmese and Saudi violators under this law but given the Iranian regime a pass? Where are the robust sanctions that were promised by Global Affairs?

Similarly, on June 12, 2018, Parliament passed a motion stipulating that Canada, "...immediately designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a listed terrorist entity under the Criminal Code of Canada...".

The IRGC has certainly earned this listing. From its inception, the IRGC, in its entirety, has supported and directly committed acts constituting terrorist activity under Canadian law. This assertion was recently addressed by the Canadian courts in a lawsuit filed by terror victims. The courts found for the victims and confirmed the culpability of Iran and the IRGC for terror sponsorship as a matter of judicial findings of fact and conclusions of law.

● (1315)

This listing has also been advocated by distinguished Canadians like Irwin Cotler, Bob Rae and many other MPs on both sides of the aisle. However, it has now been almost a year since that parliamentary motion was passed, and the IRGC still remains unlisted.

If, for whatever reason, the courts and Mr. Cotler and Mr. Rae are insufficient in considering the efficacy of such a listing, perhaps we should simply pay closer attention to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, who put it very simply: "If one day this corps [the IRGC] ceases to exist in our society, the authority of our Islamic Revolution shall collapse". Clearly, the IRGC is a key force in Iran, enabling the vast industry of persecution suppressing the Iranian people, and we should not be empowering this entity by failing to list it for what it is—a terrorist organization.

I would like to close by addressing testimony in the last week that seemed to urge Canada to demonstrate patience in dealing with the Iranian regime, saying that listing the IRGC might be secondary to other policy options. In my opinion, patience in this case is neither a virtue nor an effective tactical strategy with regard to Iran sanctions and listing the IRGC. Patience premised on what? Is it patience for the executions, forced amputations, whippings and terrorism that continue unabated in the IRGC-run prisons on a daily basis? Is it patience for the state sponsor of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, and the regular incitement of genocide against the Jewish people? How patient should the west be with an IRGC that continues to incarcerate and abuse western dual nationals? How patient should the long-suffering Baha'i minority of Iran be, a minority that journalist Terry Glavin has rightly described as not being legally "persons" under Iranian law?

No. Those of us urging Canadian lawmakers to sanction this regime are not suffering from intemperance. We simply accept the historical reality that no number of entreaties or extraordinary incentives offered by the western world over the last 40 years have ever had any impact on this regime's outrages. Iran has amply proven that it cannot be bribed, cajoled or browbeaten into relinquishing its principled commitment to atrocity, even at enormous cost to its national interest. The only real precedent we have in at least limiting Iranian aggression is the prolonged and crippling sanctions that threatened the very existence of Iran's Islamic Revolution and brought Iran to the nuclear negotiating table.

It is my sincere hope that by the time the eighth IAW comes around next year, Canadian patience, which has been sorely tested over many years, will be replaced by principle, and that the IRGC, which is the backbone of oppression in Iran, will be listed under Canadian law.

Thank you.

● (1320)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Raza.

Our next witness is Ladan Boroumand, who is coming to us from Washington, D.C.

Go ahead.

Ms. Ladan Boroumand (Co-Founder, Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation): Good afternoon.

On behalf of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for human rights, I would like to thank the honourable members of Parliament for their interest in the situation of human rights in our country.

Given our centre's focus on the right to life, we wish to bring to your attention the Islamic Republic judiciary's utter disregard for these fundamental rights. In 2018, ABC documented 253 executions, including four child offenders. This number is not exhaustive. Secret executions are ongoing in Iran.

Furthermore, every year we gather reports of numerous lives lost to negligence or active violation of human rights and due process by security forces as well as prison or judicial authorities. The government does not authorize any independent investigation of those suspicious deaths. In 2018, we have documented 30 deaths in detention, subsequent to prison authorities' negligence and lack of medical care, torture or altercation with prison guards. Forty-nine unarmed porters carrying merchandise between Iran and neighbouring countries were shot to death by border guards. Fifty-one individuals fell victim to the abusive use of firearms by or during clashes with security forces. In addition to the 253 reported executions, 130 lives were lost to extrajudicial killings or death in detention. To these numbers we must add eight suicides in prisons. One of the victims was the Iranian-Canadian environmentalist, Kavous Seyed-Emam. Whether coerced or voluntary, suicide cases in prison point to a lack of due process, routine torture and harsh prison conditions, all of which require international scrutiny.

As of 2019, so far we have gathered the reports of 66 executions and 51 cases of lives lost to extrajudicial killing, death in detention and abusive use of firearms. One may apprehend the troubling meaning of these abominable and tragic statistics by focusing on the laws and judicial machinery that produce them.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, 200 crimes are punishable by death, including apostasy, adultery, drinking alcohol, homosexuality, rape and the vaguely defined offences of "corruption on earth" and "enmity against God". The penal code is not the only problem. The judicial system suffers from systemic shortcomings. In 1979, Iran's modern independent judiciary became a main target of its new revolutionary rulers. Soon thereafter, a five-member committee was established to purge the judicial system of undesirable elements. Judges were to be hired among men who were legitimate children and had practical commitment to Islam and allegiance to the Islamic Republic. Practically anyone could be hired as a judge who could obtain the judicial high council's permission. Seminary students who had general knowledge equivalent to a high school diploma were employed as judges or sent to work at prosecutors' offices as well as revolutionary courts. By 1989, the judiciary counted about 2,000 new judges trained in theological seminaries, many having replaced judges trained in law schools.

The risk of judicial incompetence is not the only problem defenders are facing. The constitution of the Islamic Republic denies the judiciaries' independence and submits this branch to arbitrarily serve at the pleasure of the supreme leader. The supreme leader appoints the head of the judiciary, who is the highest judicial authority of the land. The head of the judiciary has the power to appoint, promote and dismiss judges in accordance with loosely defined legal guidelines. He is empowered to remove a judge from a case without his consent if the interest of society necessitates it.

To make matters worse, the law empowers him to invalidate the court verdict that has been approved by the Supreme Court if he considers it to be in contradiction of the sharia law. Such contradiction is only a matter of opinion and interpretation. In addition to this structural shortcoming, it is important to add the systemic violation of the right of the accused to the presumption of innocence and to a proper investigation, as well as severe restriction on the work of defence lawyers, many of whom are silenced and

given long-term prison sentences for defending the rights of their clients and publicizing the violation of due process.

● (1325)

Confessions obtained under torture and other methods of duress are accepted by judges as part of a proper mode of investigation. The question is how these appalling systemic deficiencies translate into reality and shape the fate of individuals caught in the grip of the judicial system.

ABC's Omid memorial is populated with more than 24,000 victims, all of whom were deprived of due process guarantees of fair trial established by international human rights laws.

As cases similar to many others, I would draw your attention to the story of two of the victims of 2018 executions. Zanyar and Loghman Moradi, two young Iranian Kurdish citizens, were arrested in August 2009 for the alleged murder of the son of a cleric and two of his companions. Raised by his grandparents in Iran, Zanyar was the son of the well-known exiled Kurdish political activist Eqbal Moradi, who lived in Iraqi Kurdistan. Eqbal had been the target of two assassination attempts, in 2008 and 2018. The second one, in July 2018, resulted in his death.

Prior to his arrest, Zanyar had been summoned to Sanandaj information administration on numerous occasions. He was asked to co-operate in arresting his father. Zanyar and his cousin Loghman were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in order to make them confess to the murder.

In December 2010, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced them to death by public hanging, on charges related to "enmity against God", a charge brought against them as a result of their alleged involvement in the murder. The trial apparently lasted only 20 minutes. Defence witnesses who were at the crime scene and had seen the assailants, who bore no resemblance to the Moradi cousins, were not heard by the court. Access to a lawyer was denied during the pretrial and trial proceedings.

During the trial, Zanyar and Loghman both denied the charges and explained that they had confessed to the crimes only due to torture. The Supreme Court subsequently upheld their conviction, and no investigation was undertaken into the claims of torture. In response to his objections to being tortured, prison officials had told Zanyar on one occasion, "This is a political game. When your father engages in activities against us, he should expect something like this to happen."

Indeed, this was a bloody political game, as evidenced by the sudden execution of Zanyar, Loghman and another innocent Iranian Kurdish young man, Ramin Hossein Panahi, which took place just a few days after a Kurdish armed group announced that it had assaulted an automobile carrying 10 Revolutionary Guards, killing at least five of them.

The Islamic Republic's authorities detain dissidents as hostages and make them pay for other people's crimes. Dispensing justice is not the primary function of the Islamic Republic's judiciary. This institution does not even abide by the unjust laws of the land, as proved by the ongoing persecution of lawyers. The judiciary—

The Chair: Could I ask you to conclude, please? You're a little over your time.

Ms. Ladan Boroumand: I have a few more points.

The judiciary seems to be part of an arsenal meant to spread fear among citizens and coerce them into submission, as evidenced by the grim resumé of the man recently installed as its chief, Ebrahim Raisi, linked to the 1988 massacre of political prisoners. Several renowned international experts on human rights, criminal and international law have charged Raisi with crimes against humanity.

Led by a man whose resumé includes crimes against humanity, the Islamic Republic's judiciary would be better characterized as a machine for promoting arbitrariness and perpetuating state crimes. It is an obligation for the international community to hold both the man and the institution accountable.

Thank you very much.

• (1330)

The Chair: Thank you very much. My apologies for being strict on time. We have four witnesses today, and only one hour.

Speaking of our fourth witness, we have Payam Akhavan, who is a professor at McGill University, a senior fellow at the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, and co-founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre.

Mr. Akhavan, who is Baha'i, fled Iran with his family in the 1970s.

You have eight minutes to speak. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Dr. Payam Akhavan (Professor, McGill University, As an Individual): Madam Chair and honourable committee members, thank you for the invitation. I'm sorry I can't be with you in Ottawa.

I want to start with the case of my respected colleague, Nasrin Sotoudeh, because it reflects the reality of the fight for human rights in Iran, especially the important role played by women.

[English]

On March 11 of this year during a brief telephone conversation with Ms. Sotoudeh, her husband, Reza Khandan, was informed that Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran had sentenced her to 33 years in prison and 148 lashes. She was previously sentenced *in absentia* to five years in June 2018, which would bring her total sentence to 38 years if served consecutively. Her husband was also sentenced in January 2019 to six years of imprisonment, in part for posting updates on Facebook about his wife's case.

The supposed crimes for which Ms. Sotoudeh has been imprisoned, both now and in the past, provide a revealing glimpse into the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Her offences include defending the right of women and girls to be treated with dignity and equality; exposing the injustices of the death penalty, including the execution of juveniles; defending political prisoners; defending the persecuted Baha'i minority; calling for the freedom of conscience and belief; and demanding transparency and accountability by those in power.

Based on Ms. Sotoudeh's handwritten notes of the verdict dated February 19, the Revolutionary Court based its decision on a report of the intelligence ministry, and I quote, "regarding assembly and collusion with the intention to commit a crime against national security, effective membership in an anti-state group, encouraging and preparing the grounds for corruption and prostitution, disturbing public peace and order, publishing falsehoods with the intention to disturb public opinion, and appearing in public without the Islamic hijab."

In other words, beyond flagrant violations of due process, Iran has in effect criminalized the defence of human rights, especially by a legendary female lawyer who dares to defy the institutionalized gender discrimination that is integral to the ideology of the state.

Just a few days ago, on May 3, another legendary female lawyer, Narges Mohammadi, was taken from Evin prison to a hospital in Tehran for urgent treatment. According to her husband Taghi Rahmani, the doctors advised "that her uterus should be removed and said she should remain under supervision in the hospital.... But the prison authorities did not approve her stay." He noted further that "After taking images of her lungs...the doctors noticed a growth that could pose a danger," but the recommendation of hospitalization has also been denied by the authorities.

The war against women activists is by no means confined to these two renowned human rights champions. Just three days ago, on May 13, the notorious Basij paramilitary forces attacked a peaceful protest for women's rights at Tehran university. The slogans that were being chanted speak for themselves. They included "Students would rather die than be humiliated," "Unemployment, slavery, women's hijab compulsory" and "Reformists, conservatives, the game is over."

It is telling that just a few days prior to the sentencing of Nasrin Sotoudeh, the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, as mentioned by my colleague Dr. Boroumand, had appointed former presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi as the Chief Justice of Iran. Raisi's long and appalling record as a hard-liner includes membership in the notorious death commission that was responsible in 1988 for the mass execution of an estimated 5,000 political prisoners. Instead of being prosecuted for crimes against humanity, he has been promoted as head of the judiciary amid speculation that he's being groomed to become the successor to Khamenei. It should thus come as no surprise that instead of protecting human rights, the Iranian judiciary itself is an instrument for injustice and oppression.

In 2016 Raisi was appointed custodian of the Astan Quds Razavi foundation, a slush fund with more than \$20 billion in assets.

• (1335)

This is part of the web of corruption through which the government enriches those in the inner circle of power. It is also how Basij "dogs" are paid to attack peaceful protesters, such as those at the University of Tehran.

In its 2018 corruption perceptions index, Transparency International ranked Iran 138th among 180 states, with a score of 28 out of 100. Much of that money is laundered right here in Canada in the real estate markets of Toronto and Vancouver, as regime insiders fortify their position and buy influence in various quarters in Canada.

In her testimony before you last week, my esteemed colleague Ms. Shirin Ebadi noted the importance of adopting measures so that Canada does not become an accomplice to such corruption. In fact, there is an inextricable relationship between this endemic corruption and extremist ideologies aimed at preserving the status quo, aimed at preventing the emergence of a more transparent and accountable system of government that would threaten the privileges of political elites.

It is notable that on March 11, the same day that Ms. Sotoudeh informed her husband of the 33-year prison sentence, Iran was appointed to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This is a moment of truth for Canada's feminist foreign policy. The champions of human rights, the moral leaders of Iran, are the likes of Ms. Sotoudeh, Ms. Mohammadi and Ms Ebadi, even as those oppressing them desperately cling onto power and seek to sanitize the Islamic Republic's image, including whether at the UN or right here in Canada. The contrast between what they represent and what their tormentors represent couldn't be more clear. A government in which women are treated with dignity and equality, in which they exercise moral leadership and replace a hateful and misogynist ideology with a culture of human rights is a powerful alternative to the prospect of war and violence that looms over the region, a prospect with potentially catastrophic consequences.

When Ms. Sotoudeh was sentenced to prison in January 2011, she wrote a touching letter to her children, Nima and Mehraveh, who were then three and 11 years of age. "I want you to know," she said, "that, as a woman, I am proud of the heavy sentence rendered against me and honoured to have defended many human rights defenders. The relentless efforts by women have finally proven that...we can no longer be ignored."

In another letter, she told her children, "It was my desire to protect the rights of many, particularly the rights of my children and your future.... I believe that the pain that our family and the families of my clients have had to endure over the past few years is not in vain. Justice arrives exactly at the time when most have given up hope."

Upon the announcement of Nasrin Sotoudeh's prison sentence in March, French President Emmanuel Macron appointed her to the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council. Consistent with its feminist foreign policy, Canada should take similar measures to send a clear message to the people of Iran that it stands on the right side of history, that it stands with courageous women who are the moral leaders and the promise of a better future for Iran. Perhaps Canada could go one step further and bestow an honorary citizenship on Ms. Sotoudeh as a foreigner of exceptional merit, a global symbol of a different conception of power.

Thank you very much.

• (1340)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all four of our witnesses.

We have time for just three short questions of four minutes each. We will begin our questioning with Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair. I'll try to be as efficient as I can.

Ms. Shafipour, I can't imagine what you have endured, but I just want to clarify some things. I tried to follow the translation closely.

You were incarcerated twice, tortured and denied medical attention when you needed it, and you mentioned that part of the reason that you were released was an international campaign to draw attention to your circumstance. Is that correct?

Ms. Maryam Shafipour: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: That's one of the contentions sometimes at this committee about how delicate situations are, but in Iran making a lot of noise about individuals who are incarcerated is generally beneficial.

I also want to draw this to the attention to my colleagues. You were mentioning that the judge who sentenced you was Abolghasem Salavati. Is that correct?

Ms. Maryam Shafipour: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: We have a living example here today of someone who was incarcerated and tortured by one of the 16 people on the list from the Raoul Wallenberg report, suggesting that these would be the beginning of those who should be sanctioned under the Magnitsky laws. I think having you here was very beneficial for us, to put a human face on what some of the statistics really mean in real life.

Professor Akhavan, it's been some time since I've seen you. I remember that, about seven years ago, you were already raising the concerns about a sophisticated network throughout Canada in regard to money laundering for the regime, and there have been some arrests.

I have only four minutes. Briefly, why is this important for human rights? Why should this law enforcement happen here to make sure we protect human rights in Iran?

Dr. Payam Akhavan: As I mentioned, Mr. Sweet, there is an inextricable relationship between the hyper-corruption that characterizes the regime and the use of extremist ideology and violence as a means of staying in power.

Canada has become a destination of choice for much of this dirty money. It is no surprise that this not only aids and abets these human rights violations, but it also allows networks of influence that can be used to silence and intimidate human rights activists. I have many colleagues who are afraid of speaking out in public in Canada, because they have family at home and there are networks of spies right here that are able to intimidate and silence them. We need to think about all aspects of it.

Mr. David Sweet: If I have time, I'll come back to you.

Ms. Raza, it's good to see you. You look a little healthier now; I hope that's the case.

You mentioned labelling the IRGC as a terrorist organization, and that the 16 individuals identified in the Raoul Wallenberg Centre report should be sanctioned under Magnitsky.

Do you feel also, as we just heard from Professor Akhavan, that we need more serious attention from our law enforcement agencies in regard to stemming the tide of this money laundering in Canada by the regime? Do you feel that those elements would be a significant step for Canada to take to reduce human rights abuses?

Ms. Raheel Raza: Absolutely, yes. I definitely agree with everything that Professor Akhavan has said. I believe that the money-laundering aspect is very important, because it feeds the extremism that we are seeing and it feeds into institutions, organizations and mosques that are run by the regime.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Ms. Khalid for four minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for their incredible bravery. I always think that the way to judge where a country's moral compass is and how far it has come as a democracy is to see its treatment of minorities, women or people with disabilities. Unfortunately, we can't say that the situation in Iran has improved at all over the many years we've been holding the Iran Accountability Week. I thank you for your action and your courage.

Professor Akhavan, Mr. Sweet spoke a bit about the sanctions under the Magnitsky laws and the possibility of using them. We've also heard previously in the committee about the delicacy with which sanctions should be applied. We've heard that more general, broad sanctions really affect the people of Iran, rather than the perpetrators of human rights abuses.

Could you outline for us, Professor, how you think the Magnitsky laws would help in the situation in Iran?

• (1345)

Dr. Payam Akhavan: I would emphasize, first of all, that there is a difference between collective sanctions, which hurt the average Iranian, and targeted sanctions, which go after the centres of power and influence. I realize that sanctions are often a blunt instrument, but I think we need to be looking at targeted sanctions, which would help empower, rather than further marginalize, the already miserable masses in Iran, who are really struggling now to simply survive.

Having said that, I think it's really a question of exacting a cost for human rights violations beyond the annual resolutions that are adopted by the UN General Assembly. When you exact costs on particular individuals who are benefiting, in effect, from systemic criminality, then I think we can begin to create a space for civil society and other progressive forces within Iran.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you for that.

I understand that there needs to be, and in fact there has been a lot of international community pressure put on the regime over the past number of years.

Ms. Boroumand, Canada doesn't have many diplomatic ties to Iran. In fact, it has almost none. How do we as a country put

pressure? How do we negotiate? How do we provide resources to the people of Iran to better equip them to combat human rights abusers on the ground?

The Chair: Just a 30-second answer, please.

Ms. Ladan Boroumand: Actually, targeting and sanctioning human rights violators not only is a deterrent for the violators, but also boosts the morale of those fighting on the ground. One of the tricks of the totalitarian system is to make activists and dissidents feel completely isolated from within and from without.

When a government like the Canadian government, which is hosting so many Iranian migrants, targets human rights violators, then this, even psychologically, boosts the morale of others. Really the new head of the judiciary should be the target of individual sanctions for gross human rights violations. I am wondering if it's possible even to consider the judiciary as an institution to be targeted as a major systemic violator of human rights. That is the question.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Hardcastle, you have four minutes for your questions.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you to all of you. I'm going to get right into it because of the time.

Targeted sanctions and targeted support: I'm looking at it that way. We heard from Ms. Shafipour that the lawyer who championed her is now imprisoned. We heard a moment ago from Ms. Boroumand about targeting the judiciary. Are there opportunities for us that haven't been used yet and are worthy of exploring, in terms of ways that Canada can be concentrating on the judiciary?

I know that we have a periodic review coming up in November of this year. Now would be a time, in my view, to build a case and build momentum or awareness on this. I'd like to hear quickly, if you could give us your thoughts, on how we can actually target the judiciary but also support members of the judiciary who are on the front lines, helping to defend human rights.

I don't know who wants to start. Ms. Shafipour.

• (1350)

Ms. Maryam Shafipour: [*Witness spoke in Farsi, interpreted as follows:*]

I want to emphasize the point that targeted sanctions of judicial and security personnel in Iran could be very effective. The sanction of the Revolutionary Guard caused the Revolutionary Guard to not be directly involved in oppressing demonstrators in early 2018, but instead to take a back seat. Previously, the Revolutionary Guard did this in a bullying fashion and was proud of doing so, but it didn't behave this way after being sanctioned.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Thank you.

Ms. Boroumand, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Ladan Boroumand: Yes. Dr. Akhavan also knows very well that the crime against humanity committed by Mr. Raisi in 1988 has been analyzed by jurists, and they have some options that Canada may be able to support in bringing this case of a crime against humanity to some more important international forum, like The Hague, for an advisory opinion. Canada's consistent support for the special rapporteur on human rights in Iran is also very important.

Also, sanctioning individual human rights violators would be very good, because Canada is such an important immigrant destination for the Iranian community.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Ms. Raza, you have 30 seconds.

Ms. Raheel Raza: I agree with supporting the human rights voices and activists, and targeting explicit sanctions on those who are violating human rights. I've been at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. They will not do anything. It is up to us as country, Canada, to show an example. We can do it.

Also, listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization will send a very strong message of support to the Iranian people.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Okay.

Mr. Akhavan.

Dr. Payam Akhavan: In addition to targeted sanctions, you asked whether there are parts of the judiciary that we can empower. I don't think so. I think the revolutionary courts were created as an engine for mass executions from the very beginning of the revolution, as Dr. Boroumand mentioned.

The elements of the judiciary who are the human rights defenders, like Nasrin Sotoudeh and Narges Mohammadi, are all languishing in prison. We need targeted sanctions on the one hand, and we need, on

the other hand, to give recognition and legitimacy to those who are really the moral leaders in Iran, which is why I proposed that Ms. Sotoudeh be considered for honorary Canadian citizenship. I think that would send a very powerful message and encourage civil society in Iran to know that they are not alone, that they are not isolated.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all four of our witnesses; Professor Akhavan, whom I unfortunately forgot to mention in my initial introduction; Maryam Shafipour, who is here in person; Dr. Boroumand; and Raheel Raza.

I also want to thank the witnesses who came on Tuesday and the witnesses who came before the foreign affairs committee last week.

That concludes our Iran Accountability Week for 2019. The committee hopes that we have had the ability to amplify the very courageous voices of human rights defenders and advocates in Iran and outside of Iran, and we thank everybody who participated.

I will now suspend for just a few moments. We will be going in camera for committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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