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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 17, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Michael Levitt**



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

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• (1310)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to call to order this meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. We have a special session today. We're taking a break from our other committee business to look at a very important issue: the human rights situation in Mexico.

I want to thank Amnesty International—I think Kathy is here—for bringing in and helping to organize this particular visit of human rights defenders. I want to allow the maximum time, so at this point I'm going to quickly introduce our guests.

I'm going to introduce you in order of speaking, if that's okay. I'll ask each of you to maybe take five minutes, just so we have plenty of time to have some questions from the members of the subcommittee.

We have with us Rachel Vincent, from the Canadian Council for International Co-operation; Santiago Aguirre, from the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Center for Human Rights; Araceli Tecolapa Alejo, indigenous human rights defender, from the Morelos y Pavón Human Rights Center; and, Daniela Pastrana, journalist and coordinator of investigations for Periodistas de Pie.

I will ask Ms. Vincent to begin. Each of you can have five minutes. Thank you so much.

**Ms. Rachel Vincent (Co-chair, Americas Policy Group, Canadian Council for International Co-operation):** Thank you very much. We deeply appreciate your time.

I'm here on behalf of the Americas policy group of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. I started my career as a journalist in Canada and then in Mexico. I lived in Mexico in the early 1990s when the NAFTA was first being negotiated, and when violence against women—the targeted killing of women, particularly in the north where the maquiladoras, the factories, are concentrated—was first becoming headline news around the world.

Sadly, since the 1990s, the targeted killing of women and so much more violence in Mexico has spread from the north to many other parts of Mexico; some have called it a poison. This really has reached crisis proportions. This morning, you will hear from people on the front lines of that crisis—four human rights defenders—and we're proud to have them here with us today.

We thank you for your interest in their testimony and remind you that the situation for human rights defenders in Mexico is extremely well documented, including by Michel Forst, the UN special rapporteur for human rights defenders, who visited Mexico this past January and did issue a press release and a report.

We ask you on this subcommittee to do what you can to ensure that Canada makes the human rights situation in Mexico a priority in its diplomacy and indeed in its trade relationship with Mexico, and to ensure that Canadian government officials speak out on the dangerous situation for these four defenders and countless others who could not be here with us today.

We also ask that Canada of course abide by and expand upon its own new guidelines for protecting human rights defenders: a very important tool that Canada should and can embrace.

Last but not least, we would like to encourage you to hold a series of hearings focused on the situation of the human rights crisis in Mexico, and to include in that series a focus on women human rights defenders, which would be very much in line with the new feminist foreign policy and the rights-based approach of that policy.

Thank you.

Now Santiago will start us off.

**Mr. Santiago Aguirre (Human Rights Lawyer and Deputy Director, Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center):** Good afternoon.

Thanks to everyone for your time and your attention to the Mexican issues. I will try to make this brief introduction in English in order to save time. The Mexican delegation wants to thank the Canadian organizations that have made our visit to Canada possible.

This afternoon we want to talk about the Mexican crisis that is going on. Since 2006, our country has experienced an increase in violence and human rights abuses. The figures in this crisis are equal to those in countries that are experiencing civil wars.

We are talking about more than 100,000 killings. Among them are many extrajudicial executions. We don't know how many, because there are no strong investigations. We're talking about 30,000 in terms of the disappeared in the official numbers; this is a number that is equal to the numbers experienced in many countries in South America under dictatorships in the seventies. We're also talking about an increase of five times the number of complaints of torture cases in the last 10 years.

Our government has been presenting the Mexican situation in terms of a fight between the good guys and the bad guys, with the good guys being the officials of our government, and the bad guys being the ones who are part of organized crime, but this is not the reality of Mexico. In many parts of our country, the line between organized crime and government officials is not clear.

As well, the population is facing not only the violence of organized crime but also the violence of agents and officials of the Mexican government in cases of human rights abuses that are not being taken care of by our justice system. We have a huge impunity crisis in Mexico.

One of the many cases that shows the proportions of this crisis is without any doubt the enforced disappearance of 43 students from a school in the state of Guerrero that happened three years ago and that, so far, the government has not been able to solve. They said that all the students were killed and burned, but an independent international commission of investigators appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found out that this version did not have strong evidence.

This is not the only case. It's only an example of how bad things are in Mexico.

Sadly, the answer given to those who denounce these cases—the victims, the human rights defenders, and the journalists—is not a response based on justice. In many states of our country, the human rights defenders and journalists risk their lives when they denounce corruption and human rights abuses. This is the case for my colleagues who will talk to you this afternoon. Among them are my colleague from the state of Guerrero, and my colleague Daniela, who is a very brave journalist.

In other parts of the country, the human rights defenders who denounce corruption and abuses are facing other types of risks. This is the case for my NGO and the place in which I work, which was the subject of illegal surveillance by the Mexican government, using spyware. Actually, we were able to find out what was going on thanks to a Canadian agency, The Citizen Lab, from the University of Toronto.

In a context in which impunity is the rule and not the exception and a context in which corruption is undermining the efforts of civil society, we need Canada to be a stronger ally of the human rights defenders and the independent journalists, especially now that we do not have leadership from the United States in North America in regard to human rights and democracy.

●(1315)

Meeting with civil society leaders is an important step, but it is not enough in regard to the size of the crisis. We need Canada to acknowledge and recognize what is going on in Mexico and to strongly support the work of human rights defenders and independent journalists in our country.

Thank you very much for your attention. My colleagues will present further information.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're now moving to Ms. Pastrana.

**Ms. Daniela Pastrana (Journalist and Coordinator of Investigations, Periodistas de a Pie) (Interpretation):** Good afternoon. Thank you for your attention.

I work for a number of journalists who are present throughout our country and are called “journalists on the ground”. As journalists, we have had to become activists and defenders of our fundamental rights, because we have been hit very hard. There are highly documented cases that show what has happened in our country over the course of the last 10 years in Mexico, my country.

Our country has become a specialist in presenting a different face to the outside world than it shows inside the country. We have tried to document what is happening. We have held investigations and, up to the present, we have also done everything else we could to denounce what has happened. We have done that on multiple occasions. We have stood alone, without the support of the media, and without getting any help from anyone. Quite often, I wonder how it can be that we carry out investigations like the one we did on corruption in the presidential family specifically and also about the Panama Papers—we're talking about serious breaches of basic rights like extrajudicial executions—but often we're treated like the village idiot.

We document things, but nothing happens. No pressure is exercised and no one condemns the behaviour of the Mexican government, not even the Prime Minister of Canada. This is extremely upsetting. It's extremely frustrating to see to what an extent the country is being destroyed. This is a country that formerly was a country full of solidarity and joy, even though there were problems, but today the country is subject to increasing levels of degeneration and destruction. Yet no one is acting.

Since this began when there was a transition of power in the early 2000s, we have seen strange things starting to happen. For example, 110 journalists have been murdered and 24 have disappeared. There are few other democratic countries in the world where journalists disappear like this. It's a democratic country. It's not normal that 97% of murders go unpunished. How many more deaths will it take before we start taking seriously the evidence we've been putting forward for years?

This year in particular has been very difficult because we've seen very high-level journalists murdered. They were very well-known journalists who were carrying out investigations on corruption, especially in the northern part of the country—journalists who had an exemplary record. They have been murdered with complete impunity. It is truly extraordinary. A journalist was murdered when she was taking her son to school. After being threatened with murder, another one was murdered in the middle of the street, in the bright light of day.

We really don't know what to do about this. That is the message I want to bring to you. We are asking for your help. We are asking for help for our society from parliamentarians. We need help because we need you to take on the role that developed countries need to play in this kind of situation that is ravaging Mexico.

• (1320)

The thing is, there are other interests, such as trade interests, and I understand that you also want to look for Canadians' best interests to be served. Nonetheless, it is not acceptable for these interests to be served at the price of violating fundamental human rights, even though this may affect companies and other interests; businesses often go to the Canadian embassy to defend their economic interests in Mexico.

Another thing I want to say is that we all want you to imagine that there are families and entire communities that are being destroyed by this system, by this situation, and by the doublespeak that is being used by our government. It almost seems like anything goes in the country, and other countries are not condemning what's happening even though the cost is incredibly high in Mexico.

This is not acceptable. I believe that it is not acceptable for us to see this loss of life in order to permit more development in other countries.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Pastrana.

Ms. Alejo, please.

• (1325)

**Ms. Araceli Tecolapa Alejo (Indigenous Human Rights Defender, Morelos y Pavón Human Rights Center in Guerrero State) (Interpretation):** Good afternoon. My name is Araceli. As the general context in our country has already been discussed, I want to talk about the State of Guerrero, which is one of the states that has been most affected historically, given the level of education, the economic situation, discrimination, corruption, and all of these things.

Currently, these same conditions continue to exist. Guerrero is one of the states that has seen the most breaches of fundamental rights, such as forced disappearances and forced displacement. These topics are not discussed very often. My colleague mentioned the issue of the 43 students who disappeared, but there are many other cases of people who have disappeared, and these cases are not recognized currently. There are seven groups of families of disappeared individuals who are looking for 2,000 people in the State of Guerrero alone.

With that in mind, we note that the most affected population is the indigenous population, especially indigenous women, many of whom do not speak Spanish, even though Spanish is the language of the majority of Mexicans. These women are the most vulnerable individuals because they often live in extreme poverty. They are extremely marginalized. They do not speak the dominant language.

They need justice, but it is very hard for them. The government doesn't show a great deal of interest in fixing serious problems, so these women need to go by themselves to look in pits and trenches to see if they can find their family members. They need to exhume the bodies themselves, because no one is going to help them.

As for the forensic services, there are just far too many corpses in Guerrero. There are corpses that are placed in unofficial locations; no

protocol is followed to preserve those bodies or to collect data that would allow them to be identified.

Another issue is the matter of forced displacement. There is no legislation to help these victims. Very often, people who know these victims who have been disappeared need to move themselves because of the amount of violence that is inflicted on them. There is a community in Guerrero that is one of the 50 most violent, where there are 191 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. That's an extremely high rate.

By the month of September, 5,000 families were displaced. There is one case, for example, where three communities were displaced in less than three days. Five hundred families were affected by this. Why did they have to move? Because they were afraid of being murdered.

There is no public policy in place to fix this, and these problems are hitting the State of Guerrero very hard. We need the help of international organizations to ensure that our rights are respected. As activists who support these human rights, we are the only ones who can do something for these victims. We find ourselves grappling with a real battlefield, and we're the only ones who are insisting that these basic human rights be respected.

• (1330)

There is a lack of respect for the rule of law, and there is a criminalization campaign that is being carried on by some parts of the state. You need to recognize the reality that we are experiencing every day. This situation must become better known in the world. We need to end the silence. We need the statistics and the events to become well known outside our borders.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Alejo.

Lastly, we're going to hear from Mr. Lozano, please.

**Mr. Gustavo Lozano (Human Rights Defender, Mexican Network of Mining Affected People) (Interpretation):** Thank you very much. I'd like to thank my colleague Araceli for her presentation and to thank you for offering us this opportunity to speak to you about the crisis of human rights that is happening in Mexico.

My name is Gustavo Lozano. I represent the Mexican Network of Mining Affected People.

From outside Mexico, you might think that the issue of violence that we're experiencing is an issue that only affects Mexicans. Perhaps that's true in some cases, but it is not entirely true. There are some issues that cannot be explained entirely by the internal relationships that we have created in Mexico.

For example, there's the issue of mining. Large-scale mining operations have a huge impact on many areas of Mexico. There are megaprojects that lead to environmental devastation, but that also lead to serious breaches of human rights for people who live in those areas.

Let me give you some numbers so that you can be more aware of the links between mining and human rights and you will know why it's important in Canada. There are 1,327 mining projects in Mexico, and 850 of them actually have Canadian capital invested. The Mexican government can sell mining concessions to individuals—either Mexicans or people from abroad, such as Canadians—and these concessions mean that these individuals can explore the substrate of the territory. that can be done without the consent of the owners of that area. Very often, those owners are farming communities or indigenous communities.

Once these mining companies have the concessions, Canadian companies, for example, enter into contact with these farming and indigenous communities, and these communities find themselves in an economically disadvantaged situation. They're living in poverty. The companies negotiate with these communities in order to extract the mining resources that are in the ground.

There are people who are trying to defend human rights and land rights, but every situation is unique. Sometimes we're talking about indigenous communities, and other times we're talking about a lot of farming communities that start trying to defend their own rights to this land.

Over the last few years, we have succeeded in documenting 54 murders and disappearances of individuals who have refused to allow mining companies to access their land. These people mobilize their communities to resist the invasion of mining companies, and it is not only indigenous communities and farming communities that are affected by the mining activities. The Mexican Network of Mining Affected People has noticed that people who are helping to resist have many difficulties because of this. My colleagues and I have been threatened. We have had to leave our homes. We have had to leave and go and live in other cities where there is less risk.

• (1335)

Finally in this context, the Canadian embassy in Mexico is part of the problem and not part of the solution, because the embassy played an active role in exerting an influence on the adoption of Mexican legislation that would actually help Canadian mining companies. It has also played a role in delivering permits for ad hoc projects, permits that are given out by municipalities and other organizations.

We believe that the Prime Minister must better realize what is going on in Mexico and discuss it with people on the ground.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lozano.

We will now move straight to questions. We're going to begin with MP Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** We had hearings in the last Parliament in regard to the Ayotzinapa students who were killed. At that point, there wasn't any resolution to the investigation, and it seems there is still no resolution to the investigation.

One of the things I see that is profoundly different between Mexico and Venezuela is that in Venezuela there are hundreds of thousands of people marching in the streets. It seems as if in Mexico

the situation is just as severe, yet we don't see that. I'm not saying that in an accusatory manner. What is the difference?

When those students disappeared and were killed, I thought we would see a large uprising. There was for a short period of time, but what is the difference? Is there an embedded fear in the culture in Mexico because of the drug cartels and the government? I'll leave that to you.

Maybe, Mr. Aguirre, it would be best for you to answer.

**Mr. Santiago Aguirre:** Thank you for your question.

Regarding the investigation of the disappearance of the 43, so far the case has not been solved by the government. They said that the students were killed and then reduced to ashes, but independent supervision by experts concluded that there was no strong evidence to state that. Furthermore, these experts concluded that there were severe irregularities in the investigation and demanded legal action against those responsible for the investigation. Sadly, while the chief of police in charge of the investigation was removed, but he was appointed as an assistant to the president on national security issues. The whereabouts of the students have not been found yet, and their relatives are still demanding justice in Mexico.

Regarding the other part of the question on the response of society, we think that Mexican society, more and more, is organizing to demand basic human rights. It is not easy, because there is a lot of fear in many parts of the country. Civil society is in the middle between the violence of organized crime and the violence of government officials who violate human rights, but more and more, you can see rallies, protests, and demonstrations in regard to stopping the violence in Mexico.

There is a lot of labelling of victims, a lot of saying that they are responsible for the violence and that if someone is taken away or disappears, it's because he or she was involved in some illicit activity. The work of the human rights defenders and the journalists is basically showing that this is not true, but that the victims are victims and that no one deserves to disappear—

**Mr. David Sweet:** That is why we have so many journalists who have been disappeared or outright killed.

**Mr. Santiago Aguirre:** Yes.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Now, on the Mexican authorities, hundreds of thousands of people from the free world go to Mexico for holidays, and the authorities are very careful to make sure that all those resorts are very insulated and very protected in order to protect their reputation. That is obviously an issue for you in terms of getting your word out to the broader global community.

I wanted to ask you something specific. It pertains to mining and to some of the drug cartels, and to the way some of your people are victimized. Is there a legitimate registry system for land in Mexico or is it always up to the government to decide who has property rights? Does that play into some of the violence and misuse of power toward citizens in Mexico?

• (1340)

**Mr. Gustavo Lozano (Interpretation):** Yes. In Mexico, the legal and political system comes from a revolution that took place in the 19th century. The constitution we have today is a direct consequence of that revolution. During most of the 20th century, our constitution ultimately was a way of building our country. There were negotiations with Canada and the U.S. for NAFTA. Since then, this social project to build a nation has gradually become a way of building a neo-liberal country.

One of the land property models that we have in Mexico is the collective property or social property model. I'm referring not only to indigenous communities, but also to agricultural communities and the "ejidos" as we call them—collective property.

When the preliminary negotiations for NAFTA came about, the Governments of Canada and the United States asked for these areas of collective ownership to be changed into.... Well, let me say that these areas of collective ownership were inalienable. They could not be sold; the owners could not sell them. Canada and the U.S. asked them to change that model of ownership. This was in 1992. Today, we have a new ownership model that is similar but allows for the sale of land, so individuals can negotiate with collective owners of lots in order to access all of the resources in the ground.

The problem is that 13% of our national territory has been given over to mines. There are concessions to mines. The owners of those lots do not know that the resources in the ground have been given over to the mines.

For example, indigenous communities are often approached by mines for negotiations, but these negotiations are not being done on an even playing field. They are taking place between, on the one hand, mining companies with a huge amount of resources, and on the other hand, indigenous communities that are living in the most severe poverty. Large companies, both Mexican and Canadian, worry very little about the progress or development of indigenous communities. They tell them they're going to get rich, but they don't offer them any advantages in the area of, for example, health care.

Very often, the mines do not inform the indigenous communities as to the true consequences of the decision. The indigenous communities accept the terms because they have no other options. Once the mine arrives on the ground, it starts destroying the environment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're now going to move to MP Fragiskatos, please.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you to all of you for being here.

Ms. Vincent, I was reading a co-authored piece that you recently with Jess Tomlin. In the last paragraph, you both state, "The world will be more secure and more prosperous when gender equality is front and centre in foreign policy."

My question comes with a view to getting the following on the table: the relationship between gender, international trade, and human rights. Some—not in the government, but in the opposition—

have said that NAFTA is purely about economics, that it comes down to dollars and cents, and any effort to put issues such as gender onto the table, onto the agenda, amount to—quote, unquote—"virtue signalling". Also, the word "trinkets" has unfortunately been used.

I want to ask for comments from Ms. Pastrana, Ms. Alejo, and Ms. Vincent—unfortunately, we don't have as much time as I hoped—on the following: how can we address gender imbalances with a view to achieving gender equality in trade agreements?

I think issues of gender equality have a fundamental place in trade agreements. I think there is a connection between the full participation of women in the economy and human rights. I think you can make that argument, but I would love to hear your thoughts as advocates and human rights defenders.

• (1345)

**Ms. Daniela Pastrana (Interpretation):** First of all, we need to take concrete action. We need to stop making speeches and start using these agreements to further the cause of gender equality, because currently they don't do anything to further gender equality. It's very important to really define—

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** You said "currently", correct?

**Ms. Daniela Pastrana (Interpretation):** I didn't say it, actually, but I will say it now. The treaty is useless from that point of view, because Mexico has two faces. One face is turned to the outside world, and the other is turned to Mexicans. Mexico likes to pretend that everything is great as long as it's talking to outsiders, but that's not really the case. There is no equality. There's not even wage equity, because there's a lack of political desire to enforce that. The government hasn't had the will to defend the rights of communities and especially women in Mexico.

That's why I was saying that we really need to ensure that these negotiations, both the current and future ones, must take the time to discuss the rights of women. We need to take action.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** I agree with you. I think this is an opportunity in the context of negotiations around NAFTA to make sure that issues of gender equality and other issues relating to the environment and environmental protection are given primacy in the discussions. I heard you say that the current agreement doesn't do enough for that, but there's an opportunity here to fill in some gaps.

I think there is some time left, isn't there?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** If Ms. Alejo or Ms. Vincent want to comment on that as well, I'd love to hear their thoughts.

**Ms. Araceli Tecolapa Alejo (Interpretation):** I believe it's important for Canada to raise its voice in favour of human rights, not just for those who defend them actively, but for everyone, especially in Guerrero. We need to improve gender equality, wage equity, security, education—really, everything in society—because when you ensure that one right is respected, you're making sure that all rights ultimately will be respected.

Women are the ones who need to go out to work when their husbands migrate to different countries and work abroad. Women are the ones who need to support their children. Women, especially indigenous women, are three times more victimized than the average Mexican. They also suffer from triple the rate of discrimination. We need to defend all human rights, and then we'll also see an increase in gender equality.

In any case, we cannot ignore gender equality. It's part of the whole set of problems in Mexico. It's a cycle.

• (1350)

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** *Gracias.*

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

MP Hardcastle.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start by pointing out that Mr. Lozano's testimony is in keeping with our study on the Canadian mining companies and Latin America. I'd like to have his testimony folded into our study. If that's agreeable, I'd make that a motion.

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's fine. Thank you.

**Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle:** Thank you.

Further to that, thanks to all of you for your testimony here today. I am specifically intrigued by hearing from you on how we can use our current opportunity with NAFTA and other treaties to leverage and use these trade agreements to help advance human rights. I'm particularly troubled to hear about the issue of collective land ownership or communal aboriginal treaties—here, we would call them treaty agreements—and how we have encroached on these agreements with NAFTA.

As a country that is participating in any trade agreement, in any treaty, and specifically with NAFTA, how can Canada assert human rights in Mexico? It sounds as if you have some more ideas on that, Mr. Lozano. I'd like to hear from you—and anybody else—about how you think we should be asserting that.

**Mr. Gustavo Lozano (Interpretation):** Thank you very much.

This is a complicated question. This is an opportunity to call into question the very relevance of trade agreements. We shouldn't only wonder about how we can improve them but wonder even if they should exist in the first place.

In our region, we haven't done the preliminary work that should be necessary before signing such an agreement. Ultimately, the treaty is a paradoxical one because our region... Well, we've already had agreements like this in our region, but in this case, we've forgotten to negotiate about human rights and incorporate them into the treaty. In some cases, the treaty even undermines human rights, because we're constantly giving priority to economic issues. We're prioritizing economic development, trade in goods, and all of that at the expense of other questions—for example, labour mobility. Look at the border wall issue, which is a crying shame.

Very often, for example, for indigenous people, we haven't signed the same agreements. For example, Canada did not sign convention number 169 of the ILO, unlike Mexico. I don't think Canada signed that agreement.

We need to take the opportunity of these negotiations to really question the relevance of the agreement and to consider in-depth issues such as human rights, which are currently not discussed at all in the treaty. As Santiago was saying earlier, Canada could take on a greater role in the negotiations with Mexico, the whole region, and the entire world. It could even replace and take over the space that the U.S. has left vacant.

We need regional interests and the interests of individuals to be treated as more important than the interests of big corporations, which are often defended by foreign nations, as we've seen with the Canadian embassy in Mexico.

• (1355)

**Mr. Santiago Aguirre:** It is very important for us to highlight that the size of the human rights crisis in Mexico is so big that we are not only talking about addressing it with some mentions in some chapter of NAFTA: we are talking about a big human rights crisis that is going on in Mexico, and the question is, how can Canada help to build the rule of law in Mexico?

What we have learned in the last years of NAFTA is that you can have trade without justice. You can have free trade without the rule of law. That's the reality of our country. You need to question if this is the model of trade that Canada wants to support.

For us, Canada can do more and do better to support the work of journalists on human rights. It is important that the Canadian state follow up specific cases of the analysis of abuses against indigenous communities, of abuses regarding the disappearance of people, the extrajudicial killings, and the aggression against journalists. To publicly show support to the civil society of Mexico is becoming more and more important.

We have a government that sees much of the work of civil society as work that is against their interests. We are talking about a government that uses spyware against human rights NGOs. Canada needs to question if this is the partner that it wants for free trade in North America and needs to be more demanding and more exigent with regard Mexico's failure in the rule of law and the respect for basic rights.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I see that our time is actually up because we have a little committee business to do in camera.

I want to thank each and every one of you for being here today.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Chair, I have just one last thing.

If they have any further recommendations for actions that Canada could take specifically, could you ask that they submit them electronically or by paper so that we have some solid recommendations?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Please feel free to do so. Absolutely, if there are any submissions you would like to make, the committee will gladly take those on board. Thank you.



I want to thank each and every one of you, especially our out-of-town guests, for being here today.

On this committee, we understand the serious risks involved and the sacrifices you make to speak publicly on these kinds of issues. Unfortunately, we've heard that repeatedly from a number of witnesses over the last two years that this particular version of the

committee has been in play. We know the risks and we know the threats, and you raising your voices to draw attention to this is greatly appreciated by us here in the Canadian Parliament and certainly by all of us on this committee. I thank you for being here today and providing testimony.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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