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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1255)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Order, please.

We're now going to move into committee business. We have been given notice of motion from Mr. Wilfert. You see it before you:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade invite the Hon. Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the Hon. Helena Guergis, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, to appear before the Committee at the earliest opportunity to answer questions pertaining to the government's efforts to obtain justice in the murders of Domenic and Nancy Laneiro in Cancun, Mexico.

Mr. Wilfert, would you speak to your motion please.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, as you know, there are two ladies in Thunder Bay, Ontario, who, because of accusations and suggestions by the Mexican authorities, have not been able to travel outside of Canada. They can't even fly over the United States for fear they could be detained. What I'm trying to find out is, what efforts are going on to deal with it?

These people are basically in limbo. They came to us once before in this committee with one of the Ianiero sons. It's clear from all the evidence, and from the fact that the Ianiero son was with them, that they are not guilty. What they want is their name cleared.

What they want to know, and what they haven't been able to obtain, is what the Government of Canada is doing to ensure that they get removed from any list and any suspicion.

I don't think this is political in terms of being a partisan issue. For me this is an important issue. They want justice, and I really do believe that this needs to be dealt with forthwith. Again, it has had a taxing toll on their personal lives, their careers, and I do think we need to know.

I'm not here to argue with the government. I just want to know what they doing at the highest level in order to get justice.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I see the word "Honourable" written in front of my friend's name there, which means he was at one time in the Government of Canada and he should understand how the government works.

In terms of this motion, we discussed the issue at a given time, and I understand that it is of course about the two ladies seeking justice.

But that's not the issue we are facing right now, and that's why this motion is not appropriate and will not get answers.

First, there are the privacy concerns that prohibit the government from letting them know exactly what is happening.

Second, we have a different government looking into it. The murder took place in Mexico, and it's the Mexican authorities who would look into that. But we are assisting the Mexican authorities. We have stated that in public and we have stated that in the House of Commons.

The third reason this motion is out of order is very simple. The Mexican officials here in Ottawa have stated quite clearly that there are no charges, absolutely no charges, laid against these two women. Since there are no charges laid against these two women, there is nothing the Government of Canada can do until and unless charges are laid. And there are no charges laid.

Finally, the Mexicans have stated quite clearly that they are not on an official no-fly list. As for this whole idea that they are on a no-fly list, it does not exist.

The Mexicans have made it absolutely clear on all these things. Therefore, we don't understand what this motion is going to do. All they will do is come over here and answer those questions on the Privacy Act prohibitions and say that the Government of Mexico is the authority investigating the murders. They will say that they have requested assistance from the Government of Canada through the RCMP, which we are providing to them, and that has already been stated in the House. And they will tell us they are not on a no-fly list, as was stated quite clearly by the minister in the House. They are not suspects in the murders at all. They are, according to the Mexicans, persons of interest, which is because they were in that same facility.

We have talked with the Mexicans, and I can assure you that should any of these things happen whereby they are charged or put on a no-fly list, we will take strong action to protect Canadians overseas and the government will come in.

Right now this motion is going to produce no answers, no results, because there's nothing to what was stated in this motion. The government's position is very clear. Therefore, we feel it is not possible to support this motion because it will shed no light on anything.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Does anyone else wish to speak on this motion before I give it back to Mr. Wilfert to summarize? Then these will be the concluding comments on this.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, this motion has the support of the two ladies concerned. It is my understanding, and I will confirm, that they would be prepared to do a release with regard to the issue of privacy, under the Privacy Act.

As well, Mr. Obhrai has made it very clear that they are persons of interest, and that is why they are in fact unable at the present time to fly outside of this country, and if for some reason the plane stops in the U.S. or anywhere else and they are subject to arrest, we cannot.... I'm sure we have seen cases where people have stopped off in the United States and wound up in Syria and other places.

So the reality is that they want to have the answers, and whether they get the answers or not, I wouldn't want to prejudice the outcome of those discussions. But this is something that they as two Canadian citizens want, this is something that I think they deserve, and they have attempted everything under the sun and they cannot get an answer.

I'm not doing this on partisan grounds; I'm doing this because this is what they have requested. We had it here before. The minister of the day did not come. So I respectfully ask my colleagues, on compassionate grounds, to do that.

In the meantime, I would undertake to make sure that we get a release with regard to the Privacy Act issues.

The Chair: How long does that take? Is a release simply a letter from them, or is it more than that?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We will undertake to find out exactly if it's more than a letter and get back to the clerk as expeditiously as we can.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I have stated quite clearly that there are no charges laid against these two women. They aren't on any no-fly list. Therefore, on the whole idea, even if they release you from a privacy concern, what will happen, quite simply, is that we

will say they are not on a no-fly list; they are not charged anywhere or anything; they are free to go anywhere.

Should something happen, I can assure you that the Government of Canada, unlike your government, will take—

The Chair: Although you may be correct in that there has been no charge put against the two ladies in Ontario, this motion asks, what are the government's efforts to obtain justice?

Justice isn't obtained when someone isn't charged in a murder. Justice is obtained when someone is charged and convicted. That part is in the Mexicans' hands. The question is not on obtaining justice in the murders of Dominic and Nancy Ianiero. These ladies want justice. They want the people who murdered to be caught and sentenced. So there has been none.

Canada has no role in that. If indeed the murders were perpetrated by a Mexican or by someone in that country—obviously it was in that country, but whether a Mexican or not—that is up to the Mexican justice department to determine.

Maybe what the ministers would be doing here—not to put anything into the ministers' hands—would be to explain how they have attempted to move Mexico along in the investigation so that there could be justice done.

Somebody over there murdered these two. This is Canada; that's Mexico. But we have the motion.

I also have Mr. Kramp—

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): On a point of order, respectfully, Mr. Chair—and it is a respectful point of order—I believe we had concluding remarks, and I just wonder if we can move to the vote.

You did say those were concluding remarks. It was summed up. Could we procedurally carry on?

• (1305)

The Chair: That is a good point. We will proceed to the vote on Mr. Wilfert's motion to invite the ministers on this issue.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Folks, it has been a real joy today.

The meeting is adjourned.

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