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Chair: Mr. Peter Fonseca

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome, everybody. Just off the bat, let me thank our interpreting team and our technical team here for getting everybody organized and ready to go.

Welcome to meeting number four of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on February 20, 2020, the subcommittee is meeting on its study of the human rights situation of the Uighurs.

Today's witnesses are mainly appearing by video conference, and the proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I'd like to outline a few rules to follow for our witnesses. Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French.

As you are speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you will need to also switch the interpretation channel so it aligns with the language you are speaking. You may want to allow for a short pause when switching languages.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

Should any technical challenges arise, for example in relation to interpretation or a problem with your audio, please advise me, the chair, immediately, and the technical team will work to resolve them.

We have many amazing and courageous witnesses here with us today. Before we begin, I'd like to emphasize our focus on Uighurs. Several of our witnesses are experts in human rights in general, and some with an emphasis on China. There are and will be opportunities through future meetings of this committee and other government committees to address many issues in respect to China and

other human rights issues. I say this because our witnesses are here to share their expertise on Uighurs. To reiterate, we need to focus on Uighurs.

Everybody seems like they're ready to go. Welcome, witnesses. You will have six minutes for your opening statements.

First, we're going to hear from the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, Dr. Adrian Zenz, senior fellow in China studies. Next, as an individual, we have Dr. Olsi Jazexhi, professor and journalist.

Then, sharing a six-minute slot, we have David Kilgour, former member, and former chair of this committee. We stand on your shoulders, Mr. Kilgour. We also have Dr. Raziya Mahmut, vice-president, International Support for Uyghurs. I understand it will be five minutes for Dr. Mahmut and one minute for Mr. Kilgour.

Next, as an individual, we have Jacob Kovalio, associate professor, Carleton University.

If the witnesses are ready, we are going to hear from Dr. Zenz for his six-minute statement. You may proceed, Dr. Zenz.

• (1110)

Mr. Adrian Zenz (Senior Fellow in China Studies, Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation): Thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing.

Since 2017, up to 1.8 million Uighurs and other ethnic minority groups in the the northwestern Chinese region of Xinjiang have been swept up in probably the largest incarceration of an ethno-religious minority since the Holocaust. Exiled Uighurs and researchers have described this campaign as a cultural genocide.

New research gives strong evidence that Beijing's actions in Xinjiang also meet the physical genocide criterion cited in section (d) of article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group".

Starting in 2018, a growing number of female internment camp survivors testified that they were given injections that coincided with changes in or cessation of their menstrual cycles. Others reported that they were forcibly fitted with intrauterine contraceptive devices, abbreviated as IUDs, prior to internment or subjected to sterilization surgeries.

Also in 2018, official natural population growth rates in Xinjiang plummeted. In Kashgar and Hotan, two Uighur heartland regions, combined natural population growth rates fell by 84% between 2015 and 2018. In 2019, birth rates in ethnic minority regions declined by a further 30% to 56%. For 2020, one minority prefecture set a natural population growth target of near zero, specifically 1.05 per mille, a record low and a major drop in the natural population growth of that same region.

New evidence shows that drastic declines in population growth are not merely linked with the campaign of mass internment but also related to a systematic state policy to prevent births in minority regions. With many men, husbands and community leaders being detained in camps, nothing prevents the state from seizing complete control over female minority reproductive systems.

First, three different government documents show that those who violate birth prevention policies are punished with internment. Punishments for violations of birth control policies have become far more draconian, especially in 2018.

Second, in 2018, a stunning 80% of all newly placed IUDs in China, estimated by subtracting new IUD placements from removals, were fitted in Xinjiang, even though the region only makes up 1.8% of the country's population. By 2019, Xinjiang planned to subvert over 80% of women of child-bearing age in the southern four minority prefectures to birth control measures with—quote, unquote—“long-term effectiveness”. This refers to either IUDs or sterilizations.

Third, Xinjiang's health commission budgeted 260 million Chinese yuan, or \$50 million Canadian, in 2019 and 2020 to fund free birth prevention surgeries. Family planning documents from two Uighur counties show specific target figures for mass female sterilization, stating respectively that 14% and 34% of all rural women of reproductive age are to be subjected to tubal ligation sterilization. The entire region-wide program had sufficient funds in 2019 and 2020 for hundreds of thousands of such sterilizations, and some regions indicated that additional central government funds had been channelled into this campaign.

In addition, in 2019 and 2020, Xinjiang budgeted about 1.5 billion Chinese yuan or \$291 million Canadian for financial rewards for women who supposedly voluntarily opted for IUDs or sterilizations even though they are legally permitted to have more children.

In my estimation, all of these measures combined allow the Chinese state to permanently maintain Uighur natural population growth rates at levels that are 85% to 95% below those of the past two decades. The government can dial minority birth rates up and down at will, like opening or closing a faucet.

• (1115)

This new evidence is reflective not only of what we may call demographic genocide but also of a strategy of ethno-racial supremacy. Between 2015 and 2018 an estimated two million what we must assume to be Han Chinese migrants moved to Xinjiang from other parts of China, lured by lucrative job offers, free housing and free land.

I call upon the Canadian government to publicly condemn these practices, to perform a full legal determination of the nature of the atrocities that are taking place in the region and to impose sanctions on Xinjiang's political leadership.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go to Dr. Olsi Jazexhi, for six minutes, please.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi (Professor and Journalist, As an Individual): Hello, everyone.

My name is Olsi Jazexhi. I'm a historian and a scholar of Islam.

In 2019 I wanted to understand the situation of the Muslims in Xinjiang. For this reason, I visited Xinjiang from August 16 to 25. We were a group of journalists invited by the State Council Information Office of China and Xinjiang.

During our visit, which lasted almost nine days, we had the chance to get a number of lectures delivered to us by Communist Party officials, and also to visit the situation on the ground. We visited three cities: Urumqi, Aksu and Kashgar.

We stayed for around three days in Urumqi, which is the capital of Xinjiang. We were presented with a number of white papers produced by the Chinese government about the situation in Xinjiang or East Turkestan. The people who delivered these white papers were Communist Party officials, people like Xu Guixiang and Ma Pinyan.

In the historical presentations that we had, for me at least as a professional historian, the narrative the Chinese Communist Party officials were giving us was that Xinjiang had historically been Han Chinese. It had belonged to the Buddhist culture, but the native Turkic people of Xinjiang, the Uighurs, who are the majority, the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tatars and other ethnic groups were latecomers.

The official narrative of the Communist Party officials for us was that Islam was a foreign religion, a religion that was imposed by force on the Uighurs. The duty of the Communist Party of China, in a few words, was to remove any connection with the Islamic culture of these people and turn them back into their so-called native culture and religion which was connected with Buddhism and Han Chinese.

We visited the museum of Xinjiang in Urumqi, the Aksu museum and the Kashgar museum. In these museums, the Chinese government delivered the same kind of historical narrative, whereby the Uighurs and their religion, Islam, was depicted as foreign and as the source of extremism and terrorism. The whole narrative was that this region had historically belonged to Imperial China.

Apart from visiting these museums, we also visited two vocational training centres, or what we call, in the west, concentration camps.

The first vocational training centre that we visited was in the city of Aksu, the Onsu County Vocational Skills Training Center. The Chinese government wanted to present this first vocational centre to us, as foreign journalists, as being schools and not prisons. They were in fact prisons.

People have seen my videos on YouTube. I uploaded them when I was in Aksu at the time that I visited the concentration camp. I asked our Chinese hosts a number of questions.

Number one, I asked them, "Who are these people you are keeping here in these centres?" The Chinese claim was that these people were students. I then asked them, "Are these people allowed to go to their home?" The answer was no.

• (1120)

Number two, I investigated what they were doing in these concentration camps. These people didn't have access to a phone, Internet, or their families. These people had been taken from their homes two years before.

We entered the concentration camp, which the Chinese authorities had designed as a school. They wanted us to film these people singing and dancing in order to show the outside world that these were not concentration camps but schools. We started to ask these prisoners about their conditions. Number one, we started speaking to them in their Turkish language. We were greeting them in their native language. We said, "*As-salaam alaikum*" or "*Yahshi mu siz,*" which mean "peace be with you" and "how are you". The Uighurs who understood us very well were afraid to respond in their native language. They responded in Chinese.

The Chair: Thank you.

We are going to move to our next witnesses, Dr. Raziya Mahmut and Mr. David Kilgour.

Go ahead for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. David Kilgour (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair, distinguished members.

[*English*]

Dr. Mahmut speaks perfect French, so you're welcome to speak to her in French.

I'll be very short. I will just say that last December in Brussels at an event sponsored by the World Uyghur Congress, I made the point that forced organ pillaging from Uighurs in Xinjiang predates that from Falun Gong members, which, as I'm sure you know, began in about 2001. In 1995 surgeon Enver Tohti in Urumqi was ordered to an execution ground to remove vital organs from a wounded but still living prisoner. Appalled by what he had done, Tohti later left China.

Ethan Gutmann's book *The Slaughter* estimates that the organs of 65,000 Falun Gong and 2,000 to 4,000 Uighurs, Tibetans and Christians were harvested in the 2000 to 2008 period.

Finally, Dr. Mahmut is a Canadian of East Turkestan origin. She has two master's degrees, one from the University of Montreal and one from Brussels. She has a Ph.D. from Carleton in biology. She is

a scientist but she is appearing on behalf of International Support for Uyghurs and in her private capacity.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Raziya Mahmut (Vice-President, International Support for Uyghurs): Good morning, Mr. Chair and distinguished members.

[*English*]

It's an honour to be here.

To begin, I will go straight to our topic, which is the worst human rights tragedy in my homeland. We call it, as I know it, East Turkestan, but China calls it Xinjiang.

Uighurs have always faced systemic discrimination and have a long and painful history of human rights violations under China's Communist Party regime.

As an example, 60 years ago the region was chosen as a nuclear test site. It was the only nuclear test site used in China but it was the largest in the world. This nuclear testing had terrible long-term implications for our homeland. For example, our homeland and traditional way of life have disappeared. There is widespread environmental degradation and health-related issues are enormous. For example, the rate of cancer is 30% to 35% higher than the state average and birth defects are commonplace.

Sadly, nuclear testing has happened for 60 years. Sadly the CCP's imperialism and complete disregard for the Uighur peoples does not end with its nuclear testing ambition. Now, it's 2020 and mounting public evidence shows ongoing atrocities on an unprecedented scale in occupied East Turkestan. It's estimated that up to three million Uighurs and other Kazakh minority people are locked up in concentration camps.

The Turkic people have been detained in concentration camps where they are enduring horrific conditions, torture and brainwashing. Children whose parents have been detained in concentration camps are being sent to state-run orphanages. They are forced to assimilate. There are the invasive home stays of Chinese officials, concern around organ harvesting, beauty products made using the hair of detainees, and the list goes on.

Earlier this year, the Australians started a public initiative to uncover a mass scale of Uighurs and the other Turkic people transferred to forced labour camps, and the first manufactured consumer products for export to the west, such as textiles, automotive parts, electronics, and much more.

Very recently we learned that Beijing is conducting widespread forced sterilization and abortion on Uighur women. Dr. Zenz is an expert on this. The world has known since 2016 about the CCP's concentration camps that are part of its official strategy of dehumanization, assimilation and genocide under the pretext of the people's war on terror.

Even before then, Beijing disregarded Uighur human rights. For example, Uighur activist and Canadian citizen Huseyin Celil has been imprisoned in China since 2006.

The CCP has turned East Turkestan into a brutal totalitarian police state. Everything that makes us unique has been targeted: our language, culture, history, religion and identity. Our books and our history have been rewritten. Thousands of our mosques, shrines, graveyards and other sites of cultural and religious significance have been destroyed as the CCP targets us to erase traces of our very existence.

We Uighurs now refer to ourselves as a people destroyed.

As you know, this committee held a hearing on this issue in 2018. I was here, and it doesn't seem to have moved the Canadian government to act. Let's hope today's hearing has a greater impact.

This committee could help by issuing a formal statement demanding that Chairman Xi Jinping immediately abolish the concentration camps and release the detainees. We are calling on the Canadian government to use its Magnitsky legislation to target China's Communist officials for perpetrating gross and systematic human rights violations against Uighurs.

We are calling on the government to grant asylum to Uighurs and Kazakhs from China, with a blanket refusal to deport them back.

The Uighur community is suffering profoundly and we hope that Canada will help us stop this horror.

• (1125)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Mahmut and Mr. Kilgour.

We will now go to our final witness for panel one, Mr. Jacob Kovalio, associate professor at Carleton University.

• (1130)

Mr. Jacob Kovalio (Associate Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I value the opportunity to participate in this virtual round table on the human rights situation of the Uighur people in China. I will address that first, followed by my assessment of the Beijing regime.

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which the local Uighur aboriginal people know as East Turkestan, is a very large area of 1.7 million square kilometres. It is relatively sparsely populated, very rich in natural resources and located most strategically at the heart of Xi Jinping's belt and road initiative.

China has a non-monotheistic culture where religion has always been subservient to the state, unlike the Uighur culture, where Islam is an integral part of life, as Buddhism is in Tibet. The pretext for anti-Uighur policies over the past decade is what Beijing calls separatism, extremism and terrorism.

These are the measures enforced since the so-called strike hard campaign against violent terrorism in Xinjiang in May 2014, and especially since 2016, when Chen Quanguo became Xinjiang Communist Party boss. There is relentless surveillance using closed-circuit television, artificial intelligence, facial recognition and biomet-

ric data. A new grid surveillance system, where each square contains 500 people for stronger surveillance, has just been completed. There are hundreds of so-called vocational re-education as well as forced labour camps, where around 1.2 million Uighurs, including hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren, are incarcerated. The focus is on Mandarin training, intense Han Chinese nationalist indoctrination and strict discipline.

Many Uighurs are forced to host Han Chinese agents into their families as so-called family members who train their hosts in Mandarin and Chinese nationalism. Beards and hijab are very strongly discouraged. Contraception and the sterilization of women, as has been already referred to, are pushed. Muhammad and Medina are not allowed as names for new babies. All these steps aim at assimilation through sinification or monoculturalism. Sinification is accelerated through Han settlers moving into Xinjiang.

What kind of a regime is the “people's republic” in name only, ruled over by the Chinese Communist Party also by name only? In an intriguing case of dire history repeated, in a process launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 and completed by Xi Jinping in March 2018, China has evolved from Maoist Communism to what I call, in a purely descriptive designation, fascism or Confucian fascism with Han Chinese characteristics for the new era.

To Mussolini's “everything within the state, nothing against the state and nothing outside the fascist state”, Xi Jinping's slogan is that the country, the military, society, schools, north, south, east and west, all belong to the Communist Party state. *Weiwen*, preserving social stability, is the foundation of the domestic policy of the regime, the Chinese version of *Gleichschaltung*.

Marxism and fascism differ only on one thing, and that's private property, which fascism allows. However, unlike liberal democracies, the Beijing regime, since 2012 lorded over by the never-elected strongman-for-life Xi Jinping, because of its overwhelming political power has the last word on large private businesses as well. Most of China's top businessmen are members of the Chinese Communist Party. Marx and Mao, Xi Jinping's heroes, are probably spinning in their graves.

The Chair: I apologize, Mr. Kovalio, but could you move your microphone a little lower?

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: Yes.

Is this better?

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: I have just a few sentences left.

The Chair: We have very little time, so that's good.

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: In terms of China's core interests, *heshin ri'i* is the term for Beijing's aggressive, not assertive, foreign policy in the past 15 years. Indeed, it's the Chinese version of *Lebensraum*, the “living space” foreign policy of Germany until 1945.

China and Russia are the two most successful imperialist powers in history. In 2020 they co-lead the 21st century version of the anti-democratic axis of yore, which also includes Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

In the context of the legal aspects of the present crisis in Ottawa-Beijing relations, remarks by Professor Samantha Hoffman of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute are highly relevant:

In China there is no such thing as the rule of law. Regulations that can be largely apolitical on the surface can be political when the Communist Party of China (CCP) decides to use them for political purposes.

There are no genuine protections for the people and entities subject to the system.

I shortened my original presentation to fit within the six minutes allotted to me. Thank you very much.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Kovalio.

Witnesses, I want to thank all of you for your remarks.

We'll now move to the members, who will have an opportunity to ask the witnesses questions. Each member will have seven minutes.

We are going to get started with Mr. Genuis for our first seven minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, witnesses, for your powerful testimony.

Also thank you to everybody who is watching at home. Everybody who is watching these hearings as well is part of this important history of bearing witness to these atrocities. I know those who are watching will tell others, and that's very important.

I have a couple of introductory comments.

I want to thank the clerk for putting together an incredible list of witnesses. Over the next couple of days we have a top-notch lineup of experts who are going to really help us understand and respond to this situation.

As well, I want to say that I am very keen on having the Canada-China committee up and running to look at other issues of this relationship. We're focusing today on a specific issue, which is the Uighur genocide, but we've already heard some testimony, especially from Professor Kovalio, that underlines the need for a broader and deeper re-examination. I am hopeful that through continuing advocacy we'll be able to have the Canada-China committee working as well.

I want to acknowledge that today, July 20, is also a very important day for the Falun Gong community, the anniversary of the beginning of persecution. As David Kilgour mentioned, there is a significant connection in terms of both Uighurs and Falun Gong practitioners being victims of organ harvesting, so we acknowledge the Falun Gong community and all other communities that have been victims of horrific persecution in the PRC.

We've heard the witnesses discuss a number of important issues in terms of the Canadian response to these events: legal determinations, genocide recognition and the use of Magnitsky sanctions.

I want to start my questions with Professor Zenz.

On another aspect of our response, our engagement with corporate entities, I know you had some comments on Twitter recently about Nuctech. We've just found out that the Canadian government is hiring Nuctech to supply security technology for our embassies. You've noted that Nuctech sells technology to the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau, which is sanctioned by the U.S. in connection with human rights abuses against Uighurs.

I'd like to hear your thoughts on how we should be engaging or not engaging with the corporate entities that may be involved in Xinjiang.

Also related to that, the U.S. has passed some tough new legislation, the Uighur forced labour prevention act, aimed at sanctioning companies and addressing supply chains so that we're not complicit in what's happening in Xinjiang.

Could you speak to that, Mr. Zenz? Then if other witnesses want to weigh in on that point as well, I'd appreciate hearing from them.

Mr. Adrian Zenz: This is an excellent point. There are three things that we as western countries, democratic countries, can do.

The first is that we can call the child by its name very clearly, the atrocities in Xinjiang. The second thing is that we can impose sanctions on government officials. But the topic you are raising here is, in my opinion, the most strategic one: imposing consequences.

First of all, uncovering, highlighting and naming implicated companies, Chinese companies notably, that are complicit in the atrocities in Xinjiang, such as Huawei, such as Nuctech—which I did read about, yes—and other companies, is so important. That's something we can do, because it is, in my opinion, appropriate to impose consequences on Chinese companies that are implicated in Xinjiang. There are western companies, of course, as well, but western companies tend to be less implicated in Xinjiang. These companies, however, directly supply security and surveillance technology that enable the police state. In my opinion, it would be highly appropriate for governments to name these companies and then to have debates on them. I would absolutely advocate that one would impose certain forms of sanctions or consequences or penalties on them.

• (1140)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

You mentioned Nuctech. You mentioned Huawei. I wonder if you could speak about Dahua and Hikvision. The reason I mention these two companies is that we found out last year that the Canadian pension fund was invested in those companies.

Is it your information that those companies, as well, are involved in Xinjiang?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I have not conducted as extensive research on this topic as a number of companies, such as ASPI, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, did last year. I specifically have information on Huawei and Nuctech. Also, the IPVM has published on this, on Hikvision specifically. Hikvision was clearly receiving public security tenders in Xinjiang. Hikvision is strongly implicated.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

In the minute I have left, are there any other witnesses who want to weigh in specifically on this issue of Chinese state-owned companies or other companies that are involved in Xinjiang and the relationship between the Canadian government and those companies?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: Yes. Recently, on hair products specifically, for example, the U.S. border agency stopped certain types of products probably made with hair from detainees in concentration camps, female detainees. These products come from East Turkestan, so there is a big possibility that these hair products are made with hair from Uighurs or other Turkic people who are detained. Usually, once they have locked up people, they shave them from time to time, regularly. They all shaved their—

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll be moving to Ms. Vandenberg for seven minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of our witnesses today for incredibly compelling and very timely testimony on a topic that, as you know, this committee has done previous work on. We did do a study. It was in the fall of 2018. At that time, I think it was probably some of the most disturbing testimony I had heard.

At that time, there wasn't very much in the public domain. A lot of what we heard was second-hand. There was a tremendous desire by the authorities in Xinjiang to make sure that information was not getting out internationally. Today we have first-hand testimonies, and we have studies like that of Dr. Zenz, which are documenting things in a much more concrete way.

I would be very interested in hearing the witnesses talk a little bit about what has happened since December 2018, since our study. I know that in January of 2019 when we published the summary of evidence, the very next day China did allow UN observers into the camps. My understanding is, of course, that a lot of that was very staged. Could you comment on both what has happened there and what has happened in terms of some of the international observers and what they have documented?

In particular, I will start with you, Dr. Zenz. Your testimony on the sterilization was so chilling. Perhaps you could talk about how much of that we have documented and where it is moving and how much has shifted since 2018.

• (1145)

Mr. Adrian Zenz: In 2018 several important decisions were made and policies were established that influenced everything that happened since then. The first was forced labour. In 2018 we had a policy of shifting internment camp detainees into different placements of coerced labour. This policy was initiated in the first half of 2018. It was ramped up with the construction of a lot of “poverty

alleviation workshops”, as they are called, in the second half of 2018. We have evidence that many detainees from the vocational internment camps, which is only one type of extra-legal re-education camp, were in 2019, and are, being shifted into forced labour placements. The other thing is that in 2019, in terms of birth control, we had a much more intrusive attempt to sterilize women in the countryside especially. We had a draconian ramping up of birth prevention, coercive labour and parent-child separation through also converting a lot of preschools into boarding schools.

Basically, from 2018 to 2019 we had a shift from the shorter-term and medium-term internment campaign to the long-term police state. The policing and the securitization of wider society and the crackdown on and atrocities in Uighur society in general gathered significant speed in 2019. It's a shift to the long-term strategy that we see. It comes along with apparent normalization with a reduction of the visible police presence and a reduction and closing down of some of the vocational internment camps, although that is also unclear. It is an apparent superficial normalization of Uighur life, whereas in reality the police state is fully extended and going into long-term mode.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Would other witnesses like to comment on that?

Ms. Mahmut—

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Can I jump in?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Certainly.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: I visited these concentration camps in Xinjiang in 2019. Perhaps I can add to what has been said.

The Chinese government has been so much worried about what we are saying in the west about the presence of these concentration camps. I was part of a group of journalists and diplomats that the Chinese government had invited throughout 2019 in order to sell a fake story to the outside world, in particular to the west. We found out during our visit in 2019 that the Chinese government was so much worried about what we were saying in the west that they were trying a way to deceive the world.

After coming out of Xinjiang, in September I went public, as soon as I returned to Europe, condemning and describing to the world what they were doing with these mass internment camps. I was attacked by the *Global Times*, which is one of the official newspapers of the Chinese government, whereby I was accused as a fake reporter, among others. The Chinese authorities said they had brought, before me, around 1,000 journalists and diplomats.

Now, a big question that we are faced with in the west is why, out of 1,000 journalists and diplomats, very few are giving testimonies. The reason is that the Chinese government is very careful in organizing guided tours for foreigners, even for the UN observers.

They do not allow foreigners to interview individuals in the streets. Moreover, even for us as journalists, when they send us to these vocational training centres, they do not want us to ask questions. They only prepare shows. They want us to feel, and to show to the outside world, that China is treating the Uighurs fine, that they're happy, they're sinifying themselves and they're abandoning their language and their religion out of their own free will.

If China gave full access to investigate and question people, then there would be a huge explosion. The problem with China is that they are so worried about this, and they are spending so much—

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Thank you.

The Chair: Now we are moving to our next member, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My sincere thanks to all the witnesses. We need them at this subcommittee. Their testimony has been quite exceptional and has touched us all.

I would also like to thank the employees of the House of Commons for helping us do this work today.

I want to thank all my hon. colleagues who decided to come together and do this work. We must now ensure that this subcommittee can make an impact, beyond mere earnest talk and fine words.

I was not here in 2018. I imagine that the situation has changed, but as parliamentarians, we have a duty to propose something tangible and to be able to call things as they are. I am very happy to be with you today, and I hope that we will all truly achieve this goal together.

First and foremost, Ms. Mahmut, I would like to ask you a question.

We are talking about impact, as I just mentioned. What response do you expect from the Canadian government, right away in the short term?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: Thank you for the question, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

In the short term, we want the government to impose an official sanction on the Chinese representatives, because I imagine they have a lot of assets here. I have heard that all the assets of the government officials are primarily in the United States followed by Canada.

Canada could first freeze all the assets of the Chinese officials and then sanction them directly. That would be very effective.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, I think we are—

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: It could be done in the short term.

It is a very difficult situation for the government. You can also boycott Chinese products. Some of them come from our region, East Turkestan.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much, Ms. Mahmut.

My next question is for Mr. Zenz.

Mr. Zenz, I very much appreciated your testimony. Your comments are eye-opening. I hope that people will realize this fairly quickly.

Will this system get worse if nothing happens and nothing is done, Mr. Zenz? Is there any indication of that?

[*English*]

Mr. Adrian Zenz: The evidence that we're uncovering is certainly getting worse as we speak. I think there is significant concern as to the nature of the oppression and what it encompasses in terms of life. This is an unprecedented atrocity. It is designed to break the Uighurs. It is designed to break their souls, break their backs, put them into placements and hem them in from all sides. It's a perfect assimilation.

It's a bit like a Holocaust 2.0, if I may say so, but much more sophisticated. It flies below the radar of a lot of atrocity and classic genocide definitions, but it's all the more terrifying in the long term. This is a long-term plan. It is quite unprecedented.

If all these things continue to go on, the mental impacts and the physical impacts on the Uighurs are going to be unspeakable as year after year goes by. That's as much as I think we can say about this. This justifies an urgent response.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, since I still have some time left, I will ask Mr. Jazexhi a question.

Mr. Jazexhi, you have been on the ground. We are told that women and men are in forced labour camps and that women are actually being chemically sterilized.

What is the situation with Uyghur children? Can you tell us about them, Mr. Jazexhi?

• (1155)

[*English*]

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: On our visit, we were on a guided tour and we were not given much freedom to investigate and to understand what was going on. During our visit in major cities like Aksu and Kashgar, we tried to talk to the locals, but the Chinese Communist officials violently separated us from speaking to other people.

What we saw in these vocational training centres was that the Chinese authorities were taking adults and people from the streets. The ages of the people we saw were probably from 17 to 50. They were forcefully locking them up in these concentration camps, forcing them to eat pork—which is haram according to the Islamic religion—prohibiting them from practising their religion, their faith and their beliefs, stopping them from speaking Turkish and forcefully sinifying them.

The aim of the Communist Party officials of China for what they are doing in Xinjiang is to totally assimilate the Uighurs. Why? It's because Xinjiang sits on China's most important province for its imperialist project, the one belt one road initiative. The huge network of roads and highways that China is building, through which the Chinese government aims to colonize, economically, Asia and Africa, passes through Xinjiang. The native people of Xinjiang who are Turkic Muslims represent the major threat to China's 21st-century imperialist project, which is the economic colonization of Asia and Africa.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I will pass. I will have other questions later.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Our last member for this round is Ms. McPherson, for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you all very much for being here and sharing your expertise with us. This is such an important topic and I'm so thankful to be able to have this experience.

Thank you to all of the members of the committee who have asked such great questions, many of which I had wanted to ask, so I was happy to hear that.

I'm a new parliamentarian and one of the things I'm a little disappointed to hear is—not disappointed but—the fact that we have done this research before, that we have looked at this issue and that there are those in the room who feel we have not done enough as the Canadian government to support the Uighur people in China.

The first question I want to ask is for Dr. Mahmut.

You spoke a little about what Canada has done in the past and your hopes for what we will do moving forward. I think you spoke about making sure that we had a very clear statement where we were naming what was happening and that we were looking at sanctions and asylum for Uighur individuals.

Could you talk a little more about what you would like to see Canada do and what we have done right? What are those things you think we have done right in terms of our response, and some of the things you've seen other countries around the world do that we could learn from or emulate?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: Thank you. It's an excellent question.

Until now, Canada has done a lot of things, but it is mainly in the areas of our question on the UN and worldwide. However, it's

mostly dialogue. We haven't really seen a significant action path until now.

Significant action could be.... For example, the U.S., based on the Magnitsky legislation, for Chinese officials, specifically officials working at East Turkestan and in Xinjiang, places sanctions on them. They freeze lots of companies that have provided the technology for the atrocities in East Turkestan. Lots of companies have sanctions on them. They have also identified lots of companies that are involved in making products with forced labour, this kind of thing.

The Canadian government can do the same thing.

• (1200)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Wonderful. Thank you.

I have one other thing, a quick follow-up on that.

In terms of our engagement at the multilateral level, do you feel that Canada has done enough, or would you like to see more action at that multilateral level?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: I don't think Canada has done enough, because until now, the diplomacy between Canada and China has not been normal but Canada's response has been very mild. It should take a hard line in its response. We also request that the China-Canada relations committee meet as soon as possible and very often. We didn't hear anything and we didn't see anything about a Canada-China committee meeting or about their doing something. That should be an urgent next step.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would put forward, that if any of the other witnesses who are joining us via video technology would like to add to that, that would be great.

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: Thank you very much. I'm very impressed with the opinions of all participants. Let me go straight to the point. Now I understand why Kashgar Airport has a special lane for organ export passengers.

There was a reference to the atmosphere, especially in those vocational, so-called education camps with children. There is a memo from 2017 regarding the way in which they are to be run by those who run them. Of course I am talking about Uighur children. It says to make Mandarin training a priority, ensure full video surveillance coverage of dormitories and classrooms free of blind spots, prevent escapes, impose hard discipline and punishment for behavioural violations, promote repentance and confession, and ensure that students undergo real change.

Last, but I think not least in the context of policy suggestions as it were, there has to be, in my view, at least, more co-operation and coordination with regard to applying pressure on China, a variety of kinds of pressure, so that the Uighur situation improves.

For example, Chen Quanguo, the Communist party boss, last week was sanctioned by the U.S. Congress. I think that is something that we should consider as well. In addition to that—and there is some kind of interconnectedness here—last week the U.K. announced that it was abandoning having Huawei do its 5G network and was instead moving to Japanese technology and Japanese companies.

In other words, we—meaning the democracies of Canada, the United States, Europe and Japan—should do more to reinforce or impress upon the Chinese regime, and first and foremost, of course, Xi Jinping, what we are all about, because this a dire threat, not only to the Uighurs first and foremost but also to the rest of the democratic world.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have just one very quick question, a follow-up question actually for Mr. Zenz.

Mr. Zenz, you talked a bit about western companies not being as implicated in their supply chains. Could you talk a little about that? My understanding is that there are a number of western-based multinationals or corporations that are implicated, and I'd like your thoughts on how we could work with them on that.

Mr. Adrian Zenz: Western companies do sell products. Some like Heinz produce tomato ketchup and Volkswagen produces cars. The most direct implication in the police state is through technology, which involves Chinese companies and Chinese technology, but I think western implications are much more through the supply chain, and also cotton and textiles, especially textiles, so—

The Chair: That ends our first round. We now move into our second round, which will be five minutes of questions by each of the members.

We will move to Ms. Khalid for the first five minutes.

• (1205)

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

Thanks to all of you, witnesses. I really do appreciate your advocacy and your testimony. I've been trying to unpack some of the recommendations that some of you have made. I will try to do the best that I can in my five minutes.

Mr. Zenz, in one of your recommendations, you said that there needs to be a full legal determination of the nature of the atrocities.

Who do you think should be making that legal determination? Are you suggesting Canada specifically or the international community as an organization?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I would like to see both. I think individual nations have a responsibility. Sometimes there's a legal precedent to make a determination of the nature of the atrocity. For example, I'm aware that the United States State Department is able to do that, but hasn't done so, which is a notable omission. I'm not sure about the situation in Canada, but I believe that individual western democratic nations should do so, and then on top of that, at the multilateral level with the United Nations as well. There we have the problem of elite co-optation by China.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

I think the ultimate objective of a lot of these recommendations is to encourage China to stop these atrocities against the Uighur community.

Dr. Olsi, in your testimony you spoke about how you were invited to film the concentration camps or the re-educational camps. Can you go into that a little more? Why did you get invited to film?

Do you think it's because China feels pressure from the international community that it needed to respond to that pressure by inviting you?

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Yes, Iqra, that is right. China is under a lot of pressure. We saw, even during our visit in Xinjiang, the first-class treatment the Chinese authorities were giving to us, hoping we would give a more positive view to the outside world about what Xinjiang is today and the situation for Uighurs.

I want to add one point, if I may. The Uighur issue is also a Muslim issue, apart from being a human rights issue. One suggestion I'd like to give to Canada and to Canadian politicians is that we should also approach Muslim countries. What the Chinese are doing, a thing I describe in my articles and what the Chinese authorities told us when we were there, is that the aim of the Chinese authorities is to eradicate Islam. They have closed mosques, destroyed mosques. If a person who is under 60 years old is caught practising Islam without a licence, meaning if you want to pray to God you have to go to local party officials to get a licence for praying to your God.... The Chinese are targeting Islam because they see this ideology as threatening their process of sinification. Therefore, I believe that, apart from western democracies, we should also approach Muslim countries.

You have to know something after all—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm so sorry, I'm going to cut you off. I have one more question and not a lot of time.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Fine. I'm sorry.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Dr. Mahmut, you had recommended that Canada look at asylum options. We've heard in the past first-hand testimony from witnesses who talked about surveillance of the Uighur community in China but also here in Canada as well. What would the implications be if Canada were to extend asylum, etc.?

How would that conflict with or how would we as a country work around the surveillance and the protection of the Uighur community here in Canada and abroad?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: That's an excellent question. Thank you, Iqra.

Yes, we're under very tight surveillance. Right now we can't bring our people, our family or anybody in another country. It's a fact. However, we have more than 30,000 Uighurs fleeing all over the country, all over the world, specifically in Turkey. We can give them asylum to bring them back here. We can do it right now directly for the people staying and suffering in the concentration camps. For the 30,000 Uighurs fleeing, they are stateless, staying all over Turkey, in the Middle East and even in Thailand, everywhere. We can give them—

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

Now we will move for five minutes to the vice-chair of this committee and the impetus for our hearings. We should thank Mr. David Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi made a great point. I hope we take that into consideration. I am certain that if you trace the issue with the Rohingya in Burma, you'll find Chinese Community Party money manipulating the Burmese government as well, persecuting the Rohingya Muslims there, as well as the same here with Uighur Muslims. There's no doubt in my mind.

Chair, this will sound like I'm going wide but I'm going to go narrow quickly.

Dr. Kovalio, Mao Zedong, through the Cultural Revolution, through the Great Leap Forward, through numerous purges, through the Hundred Flowers, was responsible for tens of millions of deaths of Han Chinese and minorities. Xi Jinping seems to me to be the leader who best replicates Mao Zedong these days. Would you agree with that, Dr. Kovalio?

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: Yes, Mr. Sweet. I appreciate your question; it's very pertinent.

I'd like to reply to your very thoughtful question by saying that it's all our fault. We in the west have, without second thought that I'm aware of, agreed to conduct normal relations, not only economic but also political, with a regime, the core thinker and founder of which is without any doubt the worst, most genocidal leader in the second half of the 20th century and even earlier than that, whose picture adorns Tiananmen Square and is splattered on bank notes, without thinking even for a moment. The way I look at it at least, there is some kind of a disconnect there.

How do we conduct regular relations with a regime that embodies genocide, first of all of its own people, for goodness sake, in the Great Leap Forward in the so-called Cultural Revolution, and in "smaller numbers" in 1989 Tiananmen? Now, because of this terrible pandemic, the origin of which is in Wuhan without any doubt and hit us, maybe we'll start thinking in deeper ways as to how to reappraise and change very significantly our relationship with the Chinese regime.

Mr. David Sweet: Thanks, Dr. Kovalio.

I have to circle back because I want to make a point for my colleagues.

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: With this being the case, we can only expect, Dr. Zenz, that the persecution against Uighurs will get worse in the days ahead, from what we've seen in the evidence from 2018 till now as well as the profile of the leader that we have. Would you agree with that, Dr. Zenz, or would you have some other comment on it?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: That depends on your definition of "worse".

It is my opinion that China's plan is to break and assimilate the Uighurs. In this way, I believe it is distinct from the Nazi plan to obliterate and eradicate the Jews. However, Beijing's plan to subjugate and assimilate the Uighurs does involve higher mortality, higher deaths, torture, brutal population control and possibly even population reduction to an unknown extent.

The problem is, if their plans are failing or if their plans don't turn out as expected, there's always a possibility that things end up even worse than that. They are capable of doing anything and are very, very ruthless. As a result, the situation is extremely concerning. I would agree with that.

Mr. David Sweet: Dr. Zenz, have you seen the video of the Uighur men zip-tied, hooded in some cases, beside the train tracks with the guards, which the BBC has just recently said they verified with western security sources?

• (1215)

Mr. Adrian Zenz: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: What does that say to you about the treatment of Uighurs at this point now?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: Hundreds of thousands of Uighurs have been and are being sentenced to long-term prison terms to get them out of the way, especially culturally, and academics, musicians, artists, educators and translators would be among those.

There's a long-term plan to shift people into prisons and different prison systems in coercive labour and a bunch of them are not going to make it. Others are being shifted into vocational internment camps and into forced labour, so we have a complicated situation and these kinds of gruesome prison transfers. What you saw were detainees from the Kashgar detention centre who were being shifted from Kashgar to Korla. This is normality in Xinjiang. It's a police state. People are being shifted, and they're being shifted to places—

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Zuberi, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I'd like to thank all the witnesses for testifying about this very important issue, all parliamentarians for taking the time to study this matter and those listening.

I want to ask a question that picks up from a colleague who asked about the difference in terms of information that we have today and the information from 2018 when we studied this matter as a committee. What is the difference in terms of the information we have?

From what I understand—and maybe you can flesh this out some more—up until 2018, we had anecdotal information. Survivors of the concentration camps came forth to speak. In that period I understand there was the consortium of journalists that came forth and published the leaked documents from the CCP, and those documents showed that a program was in place.

Maybe Dr. Zenz, Dr. Kovalio and Dr. Mahmut and others can comment on this, please.

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I will concisely start.

The new information we have is, as you mentioned, that China shows definitely that these camps exist and are run like prisons, and they're not just benign vocational training.

Second, we have more data from the ground as to the percentage. In some areas, up to 28% of all Uighurs, especially males, are being interned in Uighur regions. We have more systematic policy evidence that documents of the Chinese government prove that these camps are designed to wash brains, a literal quote from Chinese documents. We have evidence that forced labour is a systematic government policy on different levels, both pertaining to the internment camps and to all males or adults in society. We have new evidence on parent-child separation as a systematic practice and policy and now most recently evidence of demographic genocide and sterilization.

We have a huge body of new evidence.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I'll just pick up on that point.

You mentioned there's a huge body of evidence that has established that there are leaks from the Chinese Community Party that allow us to independently verify this. It's not simply anecdotal information as it was before.

We know that the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was of December 9, 1948, commonly known as the Genocide Convention, in article II(d) says, "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". It gives a number of examples: "Killing of members of the group", "Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group". It continues on to section (d), which is "prevent births within the group". Section (e) is about "Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Given what I've just mentioned, which is the convention on genocide, of which both China and Canada are signatories, and given what you just mentioned, Dr. Zenz, around the new information we have for the Ph.D.s and professors, do you feel now that we can say with confidence that what we are seeing in front of us meets the definition of genocide according to the convention?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: In my opinion, it meets the definition of genocide specifically on preventing births, and partially and to an extent on some of the other ones such as mental harm and parent-child separation. The intention is to break and assimilate the Uighurs. In this sense, I do not believe that this is a genocide like the Nazi genocide of literally trying to obliterate the ethnic group in whole, but it's designed to destroy the ethnic group in part in terms of identity and even population size.

• (1220)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you. I'll leave that time for others to comment.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to—

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: The genocide definition is one simple example. In the Holocaust, hair was shaved and used as wig products. This was in the Holocaust. It's the same right now. It's only one simple example.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now move to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kilgour, we have not yet had a chance to ask you questions.

Earlier, we talked about the countries that have imposed sanctions on China for what is happening in Xinjiang. Are you aware whether that has had an effect on the relations between China and those countries?

Hon. David Kilgour: First, I must make a comment on what has been said. I imagine that all the members have seen what happened in Auschwitz. You can see hair on display in the museums there. As Ms. Mahmut just said, it is really horrible. There are 13 tonnes of Uyghur hair.

[*English*]

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: It was hair products, including wigs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. David Kilgour: In short, I have learned a lot about the issue you raised.

Our export deficit to China is now \$40 billion. How many of your constituents are unemployed because of it?

The Americans and the Europeans have eliminated a lot of jobs. I hope Mr. Zenz and the other witnesses will talk about that as well. For example, in the United States, thousands of factories are closed because of China.

Perhaps Mr. Zenz could comment on that.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Zenz, can you answer the question I asked Mr. Kilgour?

It is about the countries that have imposed sanctions on China because of what is happening on their territory. What effect has this had on their relations with China?

[*English*]

Mr. Adrian Zenz: On the United States imposing sanctions...? I'm not particularly aware of this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay.

Mr. Kilgour, I will continue with you.

We are talking about the Magnitsky sanctions. I think most people here agree that this should be done quickly.

What other steps would also be appropriate regarding China's disturbing practices toward Falun Dafa practitioners?

Hon. David Kilgour: I didn't quite understand your question.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: What can we do? What impact can we have quickly and in the short term?

Hon. David Kilgour: We have applied the Magnitsky act to people in Venezuela and many other countries, but we haven't, oddly enough, applied it to a single person in China. As a result of what we have been talking about today, it seems that we have no right to apply the Magnitsky act to people in the criminal regime in China. That is completely odd.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I would like to continue with Mr. Kovalio, with whom I have not had the opportunity to speak.

Can you cite situations from history right up to this day that are similar to what is currently happening in Xinjiang?

[English]

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: I would say almost instantly that the policies of Xi Jinping in particular—in other words since December 2012—remind us of the Sovietization and Russianization policies of Stalin, who of course moved the Tatars from Crimea, for example, to about three other places throughout the then Soviet Union.

I would also like to bring up a point of Dr. Jazexhi. If I mispronounce your name, sir, I apologize, because the substance of your point is extremely important. There is the 57-nation-strong Organization of the Islamic Conference. Where is the reaction of those many entities, particularly the three that I mentioned in the context of my historical interpretation of the renewed access, in other words Turkey, Iran and of course Pakistan, which has been very close to China for many decades? That is something that really has to be brought to the fore.

In addition to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, there were other points being made or asked—

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move to Ms. Vandenberg for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you to my colleagues for some very good questions today.

I would like to go back to something that was said earlier.

China is obviously trying very hard to make sure the international community is not necessarily seeing what's happening. There was talk of the staging—I think Mr. Zenz called it “guided tours”—but also the communications, and preventing communications from Xinjiang to the rest of the world.

Does this indicate that the pressure from the international community does shift Chinese policy and does impact China?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: To an extent, yes. There has been a campaign. China is concerned about its image, perhaps even more so among belt-and-road countries. China, I think, is now looking even more to secure its status and image in belt-and-road countries. It is especially careful not to alienate Muslim countries, because it knows that Muslim populations could quite significantly turn against China, which would be a real problem.

However, I think the impact has been a bit cosmetic. There has been no real policy change. I would have to give a very sober assessment of the real-world impact of western attention on Xinjiang, in Xinjiang itself. In my opinion, a much stronger prospect to actually change the situation on the ground is through focusing on forced labour and the ethics of forced labour.

Earlier, I mentioned that western companies are not as implicated; I meant that in respect to the police state and the security technology. Western companies are implicated in terms of their supply chain, especially in textiles, and to an extent in other products. This is also special because Uighur labour is being shifted to other provinces and is used in other factories, in other parts of China. I think that focusing on forced labour and the ethics of forced labour, on consumer awareness, is a very important avenue.

The second really important avenue is the Muslim countries. As was mentioned before, the OIC, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, on a high level has been co-opted by China. It has been bought by China, so to speak, so increasing awareness in the general population of these Muslim countries, finding a way.... And, of course, if countries like Canada impose sanctions and do big things that get in the news, that could be very helpful.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

I'll go to the other witnesses, if I could.

Mr. Jazexhi.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Yes, thank you.

I just wanted to respond to your question and to Jacob when he asked, where are the OIC, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan?

There is something that we are not doing right when it comes to the question of Xinjiang and the Uighurs. Number one is that the United States has taken the lead. We have to know that in Muslim countries the United States doesn't have a very good image. What China is doing now is trying to portray this as a kind of imperialist intervention in its internal affairs.

What we should do as Canadians is help Muslim countries and civil society organizations speak up about what is going on with the Uighurs. As I mentioned before, these people are Muslims, after all, and there is a great level of sensitivity in the Muslim world. We have seen protests and articles from Bosnia to Indonesia. But what China does, in a very smart way, is corrupt the leaders of many of these countries. It gives them weapons, high tech and technology, and tells them, “Look, things are fine in Xinjiang. We are doing nothing to the Uighurs, but the Americans are lying.” The thing is that we're not very smart about approaching the Islamic countries and telling them to stand up.

You have to know something, after all. After coming out of Xinjiang, I wrote an article with the title “What can the Muslim world do to save the Uighurs and Islam in China?” One week later, the Chinese ambassador in Ankara responded to me that I was attacking them, the Communist Party of China. They claimed that I was a liar. I responded to the Chinese ambassador in Ankara. I told him that I have facts; I have videos.

You have to know something: The Chinese are much more worried that the Muslim world would stand up against them, because this is where it will hurt them—

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Ms. McPherson, for five minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you for all the questions, everyone.

I'm sorry to cut you off there.

I have a couple of questions. One is for Dr. Zenz, and it goes back to western corporate involvement in supply chains.

Could you comment a little bit on the role that the Canadian government could play in terms of ensuring that our Canadian corporations or international corporations have due diligence in satisfying...that their supply chains are not using forced labour? I think we know there are over 80 multinationals that are implicated in this. I'm just wondering if you could comment a little bit on that, please.

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I think the first possibility is in public awareness. If governments issue supply chain warnings, as was done by the United Kingdom and the United States when both governments issued specific supply chain warnings to their companies or to companies in general, that has a big impact. I feel that is one thing that governments absolutely must do. They must raise awareness and name things by their name.

The second aspect is legal. In the United States, the CBP can block shipments that are even suspected of forced labour. The burden of proof is on the importing company. In the United Kingdom, there is an anti-slavery act that can be used. That's being challenged. The government can be sued to enforce it, although it really has not been very keen to actually enforce it.

I'm not aware of the legal situation in Canada, but I believe any legal possibilities should absolutely be exploited. If they do not exist, I think it would be high time to consider relevant legislation and to introduce relevant legislation that does target forced labour in the supply chains of companies that do business in Canada.

Ms. Heather McPherson: We do have a corporate ombudsperson, but they do not have the teeth they need to have in order to do the job appropriately. Maybe that's something we could look at.

Dr. Jazexhi, I have a quick question about when you were in China. You were in Xinjiang, looking and observing. One tool that we could use would be to promote further observation missions through the United Nations. We could be asking for this, and pushing for this.

Can you talk about whether or not you think that would be an appropriate next step for Canada to take?

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Yes, that would be a very appropriate step for Canada. However, the observers, if China will accept them, should be very demanding and should not allow the Chinese to determine their agenda. I know many diplomats and journalists who were sent to Xinjiang. They had guided tours. When they came back, they reported nothing. That's because of what the Chinese do with foreigners. They send them to big factories and to big megaprojects that they have. They send them to Uighur families who are instructed beforehand what to say. During the whole time, they are with government minders.

These observations mean nothing. We should send real observation teams to investigate, without allowing the Chinese to interrupt them and to determine their agenda.

• (1235)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I have one more minute and one very quick question for Dr. Mahmut.

We talked a little bit about the Uighurs in Canada who are suffering from intimidation and possible surveillance. Do you feel the Canadian government has done enough to protect that diaspora community in Canada?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: As of now, I haven't seen any specific legislation that has come out relevant to protecting Uighurs. Yes, we were having phone calls before; now it's nothing. Everything is cut out. We always fear that we're under Chinese embassy surveillance. We feel that. We worry. When we have some stuff like advocacy, always the embassy shows up from somewhere. This is intimidating.

I haven't seen specific legislation that has come out to protect us. It should be a next step, yes, one more step to have, I don't know, human rights protection for Uighurs in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

This will take us to our final round. Each party will have five minutes.

We'll start with Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair.

I want to pick up on some of the things we heard today from all of you.

Professor Kovalio, in your testimony you talked a little bit about the history and the official reasoning behind why China is persecuting the Uighur community. On the ground, within the Uighur community in China, I understand that there are some Uighurs who would like greater autonomy within China. There are others who would like to have autonomy or to separate from China. Can you delve into that a little bit? The Chinese response to that has been the accusation of terrorism or religious extremism.

Perhaps you could go into that a little bit, Professor Kovalio, and then I want to hear from Dr. Mahmut on the same question.

Thank you.

Mr. Jacob Kovalio: That's a good point. Thank you for the question.

There is a significant worsening of the situation across the board, particularly when it comes, in this context, to the Uighur situation—as well as the Tibetan situation, by the way. Exactly what he did in Tibet—and I'm talking about Chen Quanguo—was to squeeze Tibetans and their economy wishes and import some of those same methods into Xinjiang. That is why, as I was mentioning earlier, he was sanctioned last week by the American Congress.

In general, the kind of state that Xi Jinping has been trying to build in China since December 2012 has involved forcing upon non-Han Chinese whatever form of Han Chinese-like identity he can. That, of course, technically would start with the language. That is why there is pressure, constant pressure, regarding instruction in a variety of ways, not only in schools but also by bringing Han Chinese into Uighur families so that those Han Chinese can train their families, if you will, in the Chinese language, and of course in Chinese nationalism, which has become extremely strong again since December 2012. The same kind of policy can be seen in Tibet as well.

When we talk about the difference between Uighur tradition and Chinese tradition, this is something we cannot overlook, and it is very fundamental. When we talk about a very significant aboriginal group like the Uighurs, who are monotheistic, and the Chinese tradition, which is not only non-monotheistic but one in which religion has always been—at least for 2,000 years, if you will, in the context of Confucianism, which is not a religion—totally subservient to the state, there's a clash of values, for want of a better word, that comes to the fore every single time and that is going to make for a very significant difficulty going forward in trying to find some more humane *modus vivendi*, if you will, between the Chinese Xi Jinping regime and the Uighur aboriginal population of Xinjiang.

I'm not considering the future in very positive terms, not at all.

• (1240)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Dr. Mahmut, can you please comment?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: I totally agree with Dr. Kovalio's statement. Also, I grew up there and I witnessed everything. There are mountains of examples I could bring here, but with the time it's not possible. However, the autonomy we have had for a long time is on paper; it's nothing in reality. It's not real. This atrocity is not a one- or two-day thing; it's a long, long, long slow-motion genocide.

China's government wants our land and our resources. Anything different from Han Chinese, a different culture, is looked at as a threat to the country. I do not have a positive outlook that we will have a democratic autonomous region or something like that.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Mahmut.

We move now to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to try to share some of my time with Mr. Sweet.

It might seem a bit off, but I think it's an important point. I think it's worth underlining that Confucianism doesn't in any way inevitably point towards the kind of system that exists in China. South Korea and Taiwan are deeply influenced by Confucianism. Authoritarian leaders want to misuse Confucian ideas about filial piety, but they ignore the injunctions to rulers to be benevolent and the requirement for that as being very much embedded in Confucian philosophy. I think that's important for countering some of the propaganda narratives we get from the PRC on Chinese culture and Confucianism.

I want to follow up on Ms. McPherson's points about supply chains and ask Mr. Zenz if he has thoughts on the Uighur forced labour prevention act out of the United States, and whether this provides a good model.

Also, I wonder if anyone wants to give some further feedback on the issue of engaging with Muslim countries. It seems to me that we have to make a distinction between the leaders of Muslim-majority countries and the peoples of those countries, because the leaders of those countries have, unfortunately in many cases, chosen to look the other way, and in some cases have even been complicit in promoting anti-Muslim narratives in other countries, perhaps as a way to justify their own domestic oppression. I think we could play a big role in trying to engage civil society leaders in Muslim-majority countries and build coalitions, not exclusively at the government level but at the civil society level, to push these issues forward. Is that something that Canada or other countries in the west could play a leadership role in?

So, on those two points, supply chains and engaging civil society in Muslim-majority countries, I'd appreciate hearing from Mr. Zenz and anyone else who wants to weigh in.

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I think the forced labour prevention act, which I consider very highly, is a very effective piece of proposed legislation. First, it creates the rebuttable presumption that all goods manufactured in Xinjiang are made through forced labour. That's appropriate, not because all goods literally are, but because it's impossible to tell, as it's such a widespread policy, and therefore creating this rebuttable presumption is a very appropriate thing to do.

It further specifies that it requires an investigation into how coercive labour is spreading beyond Xinjiang into other parts of China, along the mutual pairing assistance program. I'd highly recommend that other countries look into this. The Uighur forced labour prevention act is very strongly built on my research findings and it's very robust. It's very good.

Did you want me to comment on the second point?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's okay, unless you want to.

Does anyone want to comment on that second point in particular?

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: Yes, if I may.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's great.

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: To your question about what Canada should do, your point on engaging civil society in Muslim countries is very good. As we know, many Muslim countries lack democracy. On the other hand, we have Muslim countries that practise democracy, from Indonesia to Malaysia and Turkey. There you have a huge debate on the Uighur issue, especially when it comes to Turkey. We should think how we can build bridges with many democratic Muslim countries around the world, and even to engage civil society in other countries, because civil society can be a very powerful voice to pressure governments to stand up and say something.

I will add one point, if I may. From my observations from my visit to Xinjiang, I have to tell you that China is very worried about the Muslims, because it perceives the Muslim world as its backyard, as its space of Chinese imperialism, so if the Muslim world stands up, then China is going to change its behaviour.

• (1245)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can I throw it to Mr. Sweet for a minute?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

We're going to move to Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Mahmut, does the COVID-19 crisis complicate your work? Do you think that the Chinese government will take advantage of this situation to accelerate the cultural genocide against the Uyghurs?

Dr. Raziya Mahmut: The Chinese government is indeed taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis. Evidence already published indicates that the majority of companies in China have a labour shortage because of COVID-19. Uyghurs are being sent to front-line companies to replace Chinese workers in China.

Many factories have closed, but forced labour in our region continues. The Uyghurs are still working. This means that the Chinese government took advantage of the fact that other Chinese could not work because of COVID-19 to replace them with Uyghurs.

I should add that we do not know what happened with COVID-19. I feel there are a lot of sick people there, but the information is very controlled. The government sent a huge number of people to replace Chinese people, either in the Chinese interior or in remote areas.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much, Ms. Mahmut.

Mr. Zenz, in your report, you say that "Beijing undercounts the true number of Uyghurs in Xinjiang by as many as 8–10 million" because a great number "were born in evasion of family planning policies." In addition, population counts are said to have become less rigorous in recent years.

Can you explain why the population counts in Xinjiang are less rigorous than in the past?

[*English*]

Mr. Adrian Zenz: The argument I make in my research is that the Uighur population figures of most recent dates are probably accurate. They have been catching up. In some years, they've added quite a few to the Uighur population.

The Uighur population growth was one of the highest in China. A lot were born in violation of birth control policies; therefore, there was a significant Uighur population that was not recorded, and there was no record on them. This was a big issue in the eyes of the government. I believe that's one of the main reasons they're engaging in this demographic genocide, birth prevention, to have a tighter control of the population. You see sudden spikes in population in Uighur regions.

I think the most recent figures of the Uighur population are quite accurate, and they reflect a dramatic decline in their population growth.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Zenz.

Mr. Jazexhi, earlier, you talked about Chinese imperialism in Asia. Could you clarify what that Chinese imperialism in Asia means?

[*English*]

Dr. Olsi Jazexhi: What is happening nowadays on our planet is that we are having the clash of Chinese imperialism, on the one hand, and the legacy of the Anglo-American empires from the past, on the other hand. Now China is a growing empire, an ambitious empire that is expanding.

During our visit in Xinjiang, throughout all the institutions we visited, the whole party, state and people were working toward Xi Jinping's great plan of one belt and one road. In every institution and museum we were in, the Chinese were propagating their ambitious project to send their one belt and one road project from Morocco up to Istanbul and even to Europe. The Chinese are building a new economic empire throughout Asia and Africa, and most probably their ambition is even Europe, because of their cheap product.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Jazexhi.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, you have five minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

I have a few questions. I want to follow up on some of the questions around birth control and sterilization, knowing that this is a key component of genocide and it aligns with the universal declaration of genocide. I want to talk a little bit about some of the gendered impacts.

I'm a big proponent of Canada having a feminist foreign affairs policy. I know that Dr. Zenz has done quite a lot of work on this, and I'll quote: "where women had exceeded the birth quota by two or more children, [they] must 'both adopt birth control measures with long-term effectiveness and be subjected to vocational skills education and training'".

Could you talk a little bit about whether those policies target just the women who have not aligned to the birth quota, or whether fathers are also sent for vocational skills education and training for the same reason?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: I believe the evidence we have points to the fact that if a family is in violation of birth control policies, the punishment is often levied on the husbands. A lot of those who are targeted for internment are the males. I believe one reason is to increase control over Uighur society, which is very patriarchal. You have more control over entire families, and the women, if the males are out of the way, and also if the males are the ones who are broken, beaten into submission and then placed into coercive labour.

The women, however, are targeted with birth prevention measures, the insertion of IUDs. The sterilization is female. We can tell that from budget documents. The women do quarterly IUD checks, bimonthly pregnancy checks, monthly visits. The women are subjected to these intrusive visits. Han Chinese cadres, often males, are staying with them, spending time with them, which also raises real questions about the potential for abuse in these contexts.

The males are taken out of the way. However, there are females who are put into internment camps. There are examples of females who have been put into camps for violating these policies.

Ms. Heather McPherson: In the examples where the females and the males are both put into the camps and are both taken away, I think you talked a little bit about children being put into orphanages. Could you talk a little bit about what that looks like and what the scope of that issue is?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: The scope is... In most instances, you have one parent taken away and one parent still at home, although they're put in full-time labour. One very problematic scenario is where the husbands are in camps or in faraway labour placements, and the women are in factories, local satellite factories that have nurseries, and there are preschools, so even babies are cared for by the government, at least in the daytime.

You have an increasing percentage where both of them are in internment and the children are virtual orphans, being cared for either by relatives or by the government. There are documents that show they're placed in orphanages, welfare homes. This is quite big, but the even more common scenario is where all children, even where all parents are at home or whatever the situation is, are moved towards boarding school, and longer and longer boarding school. From preschools up, but especially primary... Primary schools are being moved into middle school compounds, because these are big compounds. They have dormitories, facilities. They're kept all week long, and maybe they can come home one day a week. In some instances, however, it's every other week.

With the securitization of the entire society, we also need to look beyond the internment campaign and see the long-term impact of the long-term practice of separating families and children, even

when there's no internment or parents have been released. It's huge. That's a very long-term, intergenerational scheme of separation.

• (1255)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

I think I know the answer to this, but are there any avenues that are available to contest the decisions that are being made on sterilization or birth control?

Mr. Adrian Zenz: By foreign governments? Really, what is the United Nations there for? On what planet do we live?

I'm starting to give up on what to say and to think on this. This is ridiculous. It's been going on since 2017. My research report on the camps came out in 2018. In 2019, there were the China Cables, etc., and now this. What are we waiting for?

China is a big country, yes, but governments are barely even speaking up. They're not even being really blunt in what they say. This is their first step to take, and then you look at other possibilities, such as sanctions and United Nations—

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: This will conclude our first panel.

I want to thank the witnesses, on behalf of the committee, for the compelling testimony they've provided here. I also want to thank all the members for all the excellent questions, the analysts and the interpreters who are with us here today, and all the staff who are keeping up—it takes a lot of technology and know-how to keep us going—and all those watching.

I want to thank our clerk, Erica Pereira, for organizing all of this and keeping us on track.

With that, we are going to suspend for 15 minutes, till our second panel. Thank you.

• (1255)

(Pause)

• (1315)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

I want to thank everybody. We just heard from an excellent first panel, and I'm sure this one will be no different.

Welcome to meeting number four of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's witnesses are mainly appearing by video conference, and proceedings will be made available for all our viewers via the House of Commons website.

Should any technical challenges arise, for example with interpretation or your audio, please advise the chair immediately, and the technical team will work to resolve them.

Now I would like to welcome our witnesses. Our first witness is going to be Rayhan Asat, president of the American Turkic International Lawyers Association. Then we will have Alex Neve, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada, and then the Honourable Irwin Cotler, founding chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

With that, I thank the witnesses. Each witness is going to have six minutes for an opening statement, and we will start with Rayhan Asat.

Ms. Rayhan Asat (President, American Turkic International Lawyers Association): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I appear before you today as an attorney, an advocate, a sister and a member of the Uighur community.

The year 2020 marks four years into the Uighur human rights crisis, a crippling genocide, and yet here we are. I hope we will emerge from this hearing with an understanding that we no longer have the luxury of time to raise awareness. We need action.

A little over four years ago, I was about to graduate from Harvard law and start my career as a lawyer in D.C. I had big hopes and dreams for my future. Never had I ever thought that I would spend the next four years of my life searching for my brother and wondering if he was alive.

My brother, Ekpar Asat, is the founder of a multi-faceted media platform, Bagdax, and is a philanthropist. Above all, he is my anchor and best friend. In 2016, he came to the U.S. along with eight Han Chinese in a State Department sponsorship which many people benefited from for decades.

After returning from the State Department's trip, he was thrown into the infamous internment or concentration camp and later reportedly in prison. It was another hopeful future cut short. My brother was praised by the local government as a bridge builder and a positive force for his contribution to society, but since he is Uighur, he suffers the same fate as millions of others. My brother's case should dispel any illusions we have over whether this is about making model Chinese citizens out of Uighur people.

The feelings of loss are still raw and painful. I learned how to cope with this; however, his absence is evermore felt. The words written by Michael Kovrig from his small prison cell speak to me on a personal level: "Rest assured I remain resolute and resilient. You must be relentless." I can't help but think my brother is asking for the same. I am therefore relentless and so should you be.

Shining a light on the truth can be a matter of life and death when it comes to China. As I'm speaking out today at this time, I am terrified whether my brother will be subjected to torture, waterboarding or electrocution, as these are common patterns of cruel treatment detainees have to endure in these internment camps.

What's most agonizing is that my brother's forced labour has perhaps entered into global commerce and tainted the global supply chain. Our corporations are unknowingly or knowingly profiting off of Uighur forced labour, and we as consumers are complicit in using these products. According to the New York Times, masks produced by forced Uighur labour have now even reached North American shores.

The road to basic human dignity for the Uighur people for the world to see us has been long and torturous. The world may finally be waking up to the mass atrocities that are happening in Xinjiang due to recent highly public events that shock the conscience.

One is an authoritative report documenting the systematic mass forced sterilization of Uighur women. The second is video footage of hundreds of blindfolded, shackled and shaved Uighur men being led onto trains in Xinjiang. Some may not even realize that this footage is from nearly a year ago. The methods of eradication have surely increased since. The third is the seizure of 13 tonnes of human hair suspected of being forcibly removed from Uighur prisoners. As a Uighur western-educated woman, when I'm confronted with such abhorrent practices, it truly breaks my heart. It could have been me had I not left home over a decade ago.

The Chinese government is carrying out a multipronged, technologically advanced, systematic program of destroying Uighur people as a whole. Last week in Foreign Policy, I published an article with human rights lawyer Yonah Diamond from Canada's leading human rights NGO, the Wallenberg Centre. It lays out the overwhelming evidence amounting to genocide under the UN genocide convention, including the mass sterilization of women and detention of men, widespread torture and detention and state-sanctioned abduction of Uighur children.

• (1320)

It should be noted that Han Chinese men are even assigned to monitor Uighur women in their bedrooms while men are held in internment camps.

Beijing's campaign is now having the desired effect. Birth rates in Xinjiang are plummeting and forced sterilizations are skyrocketing. Women unable to bear and men unable to leave; they need us and it will be too late if we don't take urgent action.

I therefore kindly ask the Canadian government to formally declare that what is happening to the Uighur people is genocide. Calling it a genocide would catalyze other countries to join in a concerted effort to end the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang. It would also prompt consumers to reject the over 80 international brands that profit from genocide.

I further ask the Canadian government to impose Magnitsky sanctions on the architects of the genocide and assemble and lead a coalition of countries at the United Nations Human Rights Council to pass a resolution so the UN can dispatch a fact-finding mission to Xinjiang to further document and preserve evidence of genocide.

I hope that in all your bilateral meetings you'll please speak up for my brothers and sisters.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement, Ms. Asat.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Neve for his six-minute opening statement.

Mr. Alex Neve (Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This subcommittee's study of the staggering human rights crisis faced by Uighurs in China's western Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is welcome and urgently needed.

The crisis is, of course, not new. China's unrelenting repression of the Uighur people goes back for decades. For decades, however, governments, including Canada, failed to make it clear to China that this was unacceptable and had to stop. This is symptomatic of the failure by the international community to put human rights at the heart of our relationships with China, consistently prioritizing trade and investment prospects to the detriment of concerted human rights advocacy and diplomacy.

The scale of the suffering is unimaginable. Since 2017, authorities in Xinjiang have been engaged in a massive campaign of intrusive surveillance, arbitrary detention, torture, political indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation, targeting the region's Uighurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim people. Well over a million people have been held in so-called "transformation through education" or "vocational training centres" where they have endured a litany of human rights violations.

Consider these headlines from six Amnesty International urgent actions over just the past eight weeks, which are reflective of the unrelenting nature of the repression: "70-year-old editor Qurban Mamut held incommunicado"; "Uighur businessman Abuduaini Kadier imprisoned in secret trial"; "Grave health concerns for missing Uighur Gulshan Abbas"; "Mahira Yakub, a Uighur indicted for money transfer to her parents"; "Uighur Ekpar Asat jailed for 15 years in secret trial"; and "Uighur academic Iminjan Seydin reappears in a state broadcast after three years of incommunicado detention".

The crackdown has been decried by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and exposed by investigative journalists. Faced with undeniable evidence of mass internment, arbitrary punishment and torture, the Chinese government eventually acknowledged the camps, but absurdly claimed that they are voluntary vocational training centres. The true scope and nature of what has been taking place in Xinjiang is not yet fully known because the Chinese government steadfastly resists calls to admit independent monitors into the region.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has pressed for "full access to carry out an independent assessment of the continuing reports pointing to wide patterns of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions" in Xinjiang. Over the past year, including just three weeks ago, Canada has joined in three unprecedented statements at the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly, with more than 20 other countries, echoing that call for unhindered access and independent investigations. The Chinese government has ignored all of those interventions.

Around the world, Uighurs, Kazakhs and other ethnic Muslims are desperate for information about family members in Xinjiang. Many have been reluctant to speak, fearing retaliation. Amnesty has collected hundreds of accounts documenting how Chinese authorities in 22 countries have systematically harassed them.

As a member of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, which was established more than 20 years ago, Amnesty International released a report in May, following a similar report in 2017, documenting an intensifying campaign of interference, threats and violence against Uighur and other human rights defenders in Canada who actively draw attention to China's atrocious human rights record. None of the coalition's recommendations for action to the Canadian government have yet to be implemented.

There are important ways that Canada must and can make a difference in individual cases. Three Uighur men, Ayub Mohammed, Salahadin Abdulahad, and Khalil Mamut have endured more than 20 years of human rights abuse, first in Xinjiang and then five years of unlawful imprisonment in Guantanamo Bay, and now, despite exoneration by the U.S. government, forcible exile in Albania and Bermuda, where they have been waiting for more than five years, protracted years, while the Canadian government delays their applications to be reunited with their wives and children who are Canadian citizens. This failure to bring their human rights nightmare to an end is unconscionable.

You will hear today from Kamila Talendibaevai and her family's lawyer, Chris MacLeod. In 2006, Kamila's husband, Uighur Canadian Huseyin Celil, was arbitrarily arrested, subject to unlawful deportation, tantamount to rendition, from Uzbekistan, and now remains unjustly imprisoned in China. For 14 years this Canadian citizen has not been allowed even one consular visit by Chinese officials. Kamila has had no contact with Huseyin's family in China for the past four years. She knows nothing of his fate and is particularly fearful about his health

● (1325)

It is of course important that the Canadian government is pressing hard for the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. It is crucial to press equally hard for freedom for other Canadians unjustly imprisoned, including Huseyin Celil, who has missed 14 years of his four young sons growing up.

Let me end with six quick recommendations.

First, the Canadian government should implement a whole-of-government human rights strategy for our relationship with China, ensuring that human rights concerns, including the Uighur crisis, are prioritized consistently in all of our dealings with the Chinese government and Chinese business interests.

Second, develop a comprehensive response to the Uighur crisis including bilateral and multilateral efforts to press China to immediately release all persons held in “de-extremification” and “transformation through education” facilities and repeal all measures that restrict the exercise of human rights by Uighurs and other Muslim minorities. Take advantage of all avenues for exerting pressure, such as the possible imposition of individual sanctions under Canadian law and ensure that throughout their supply chains Canadian businesses do not contribute to or benefit from human rights violations that may be associated with forced labour in Xinjiang.

Third, work with the international community to increase pressure on the Chinese government to allow independent and unrestricted access to Xinjiang for fact-finding missions by international observers.

Fourth, take immediate steps to counter the harassment and intimidation of Uighur and other human rights defenders working on Chinese human rights concerns in Canada.

• (1330)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Neve.

Mr. Alex Neve: There are two other recommendations with respect to reunification, and the Huseyin Celil case.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to hear those.

Now from the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, we have the founding chair, the Honourable Irwin Cotler, for six minutes.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Founding Chair, Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights): I want to join my remarks to those of Rayhan and Alex and commend each of them for their tireless advocacy and commitment.

We meet at an important moment of remembrance and reminder of bearing witness, as this hearing is doing, and of taking action as both Rayhan and Alex have called for.

We meet on the 21st anniversary of the launch of the eradication campaign against the Falun Gong. For 21 years now, the Falun Gong have been subjected to persecution and prosecution, to extrajudicial executions, torture and the like for nothing other than espousing ancient Chinese values of truth, compassion and tolerance.

We also meet in the aftermath of the imposition of draconian national security legislation on the people of Hong Kong, a watershed moment in the assault on global rules based on the international order, and which has implications as well for any international advocacy, either on behalf of the Falun Gong or the Uighurs, which could be criminalized under this legislation even if it is undertaken in Canada.

We meet on the occasion of the brutal mass suppression of the Uighurs, involving as has been said in your hearings today, the mass incarceration of 1.8 million Muslims in detention camps.

Rayhan has compellingly described mass surveillance with respect to slave labour, torture and abuse, the massive population control and suppression techniques involving massive sterilization, forced abortions, coercive injections, the forced separation of over

half a million Uighur children from their families and the massive assault on their religion, culture, identity, traditions and their memory. The case of Ekpar Asat, as Rayhan has shown, is a looking glass, a case study of the disappeared and these massive human rights violations.

What can we do?

One, we need not only to unmask and expose these crimes against humanity, but to act upon them, to secure justice for the victims and accountability of the human rights violators.

Two, we need to invoke and implement the responsibility to protect. We are meeting on the 15th anniversary of the unanimous adoption by the UN of this doctrine. Canada is one of the architects. We now have to implement this doctrine with respect to the pain and plight of the Uighurs.

Three, we need to impose Magnitsky sanctions. The evidence here is clear and compelling. Join the U.S. and the U.K., which have already begun on this path and join the call of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China of which I am one of the co-chairs, along with Garnett Genuis from Canada. It now has over 600 parliamentarians calling as well for the invocation of such Magnitsky sanctions.

Four, explore interstate remedies before the International Court of Justice.

Five, Parliament should take the lead in finding that these mass atrocities effectively constitute acts of genocide. We were the first Parliament to define what was happening to the Rohingya as a genocide. We should become the first Parliament to define what is happening to the Uighurs as a genocide.

Six, we need to call out the illegal and forced harvesting and pillaging of organs of the Uighurs along with the Falun Gong, which Chinese Human Rights Defenders recently called out as crimes against humanity, if not acts of genocide. We need to utilize UN special procedures and remedies for purposes of justice and accountability.

Finally, we need to take up the cause of Huseyin Celil and seek his release. As Alex mentioned, he has been languishing for 15 years in a Chinese prison. We need to take up the case of Ekpar Asat, Rayhan's brother who has disappeared, as a looking glass into these mass atrocities. Both serve as a remembrance and a reminder of the call to action that we have to undertake along with the international community.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1335)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cotler.

This opens up the opportunity to go to the members for questions.

We will start with Mr. Genuis for seven minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That again was powerful testimony from all the witnesses. It seems that so far, we have unanimous support among the witnesses we've heard from around recognizing what's happening as a genocide. I'll start there.

Professor Cotler, some would say that it's not the role of national parliaments to recognize genocide, that it's the role of international bodies. What is your response to that?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: My response is that genocide obliges us all—internationally, domestically, governments, parliaments, civil societies, and here the Canadian Parliament has a distinguishable role—to call out genocide. It's a responsibility under the genocide convention to both prevent and punish acts of genocide.

It would be first and foremost a responsibility for Parliament to define these acts targeting the Uighurs as constitutive of acts of genocide, as the witness testimony has so eloquently and compellingly conveyed before this committee, and therefore to undertake the responsibility, having so defined it, to take the necessary action. We did so with regard to the Rohingya, as I mentioned. I might add that the decision was taken after we had hearings before this foreign affairs subcommittee, when I was a member of this foreign affairs subcommittee, which documented then the atrocities that were targeting the Rohingya at the time. Subsequently, this led to Canada becoming the first parliament to define what was happening to the Rohingya as a genocide. This too led to the initiatives taken at both the International Court of Justice, which I hope Canada will join, in that case with the Gambia, and with respect to the initiatives at the International Criminal Court.

There's a responsibility here to call it out and to act upon it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much, Professor Cotler.

That's very strong and very important. National parliaments have a responsibility under these conventions to identify and to act, not simply to defer responsibility to some amorphous other. We should engage in international bodies to pursue a collective response, but we also have specific responsibilities under the convention. Is that correct?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: That is correct.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Thank you.

Could you speak more about the doctrine of responsibility to protect and what that obliges us to do? If the government were, today, to take your recommendation and say that what is happening to the Uighur Muslims in China is genocide, what would they then be obliged to do as a result of that declaration?

• (1340)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: When I was minister of justice back in 2005, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the responsibility to protect doctrine. That doctrine says, simply put, that if in any country we are witnessing war crimes, crimes against humanity and, God forbid, the unthinkable, namely genocide, and the govern-

ment in that country is unwilling or unable to act or, worse, is the author of those crimes against humanity, if not genocide, then there is a responsibility on behalf of the international community to intervene and act to prevent, to punish and to sanction those war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. What we have here with respect to the Uighurs is a classic case study of such war crimes, crimes against humanity and, as I and others have mentioned, acts that are constitutive of genocide. That warrants our involvement, under the responsibility to protect doctrine, to initiate, undertake and implement the panoply of remedies that were heretofore recommended before your committee, some of which I recommended in my testimony, this being part of the responsibility to protect doctrine.

I might add just one other thing. I'm not unmindful of the fact that we are meeting in the aftermath of the 26th anniversary of the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda. What makes the genocide of the Tutsis so unspeakable is not only the horror of the genocide itself, where some 10,000 Tutsis were murdered, every day for three months, but also that it was preventable. Nobody could say that they did not know. We knew but we did not act. Now, with regard to the Uighurs, nobody can say that they do not know. We know and we must act.

To quote from my mentor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, who taught me some of the more compelling human rights lessons I know, silence in the face of evil ends up being complicity with evil itself. Indifference to mass atrocities, let alone genocide, always means coming down on the side of the victimizer and not on the side of the victims. Our responsibility to protect is justice for the victims and accountability for the violators.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you so much.

As William Wilberforce said, "You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know."

In the minute I have left, I want to go to Ms. Asat.

Thank you so much for your testimony.

Did I hear you right that there's evidence of slave labour involved in the production of masks from China specifically?

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Yes, indeed. Actually, this information just came to light yesterday as a result of the incredibly detailed investigative journalism of the New York Times. Everybody knows there's a very well-documented research piece called "Uyghurs for sale", which identified and flagged more than 80 international brands that are entangled in the use of Uighur forced labour. I think this has also extended to the masks during this COVID pandemic. As people are perhaps wearing masks to get around, they could perhaps be using one of those masks that were produced as a result of forced labour. It could be even my brother's prison labour.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I believe you're testifying from the United States. Do you have any comments on initiatives in Congress and the U.S. Senate around addressing supply chain issues? I mentioned the Uighur forced labour prevention act and other bipartisan initiatives in the U.S. that are seeking to address this issue.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Absolutely. With the passage of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, we now have pending legislation, which is, as you rightfully put it, the Uighur forced labour prevention act. I hope, with the massive use of Uighur forced labour tainting the global supply chain, we're not going to be limited to this legislation, but actually pass other legislation. This is a common practice, too. In the U.K. we have the Modern Slavery Act, and in Australia we have similar legislation. I hope this can be extended to other jurisdictions, but the specific [*Inaudible—Editor*] would be forced labour.

• (1345)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Asat.

We'll move to Mr. Zuberi, for seven minutes.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Although we heard from Mr. Cotler, I would like to hear from the other two witnesses their expert opinion about what's happening to the Uighur people in terms of meeting the threshold of the genocide convention definition of genocide, which I'm sure you're familiar with given that both of you are lawyers and involved in this sort of work. If you don't know the definition, I can read it for you, but from your knowledge of the facts on the ground and the law, does this meet the definition of genocide?

I have a series of other questions, so I'd like a quick response on that.

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Yes, I'm happy to respond.

I think we do have a very strong case for genocide because it meets both the intent element.... I think that with everything we've seen so far, mass sterilization of women and detaining people of child-bearing age in internment camps and giving them lengthy sentences—15 to 20 years is a basic norm—and then separating children from their family members and placing them in these state orphanage schools, the Chinese government is perfectly laying the groundwork for eradicating the Uighur people as a whole. Not only does it meet the *mens rea*, the intent element under the genocide convention, but we also have well-documented evidence that shows the Chinese government did commit all these crimes. It meets both elements and it perfectly fits within the definition in the genocide convention.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

Mr. Neve, I'm sure you're very familiar with article II of the convention, which includes operatively the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”, etc., and defines some examples of genocide, including preventing births and also forcibly transferring children, and other elements of the article.

Do you feel that the threshold is met, Mr. Neve?

Mr. Alex Neve: Well, I guess I have to qualify that I'm not in a position to be able to give my own personal views about that by virtue of my position as secretary general of Amnesty International Canada.

What I can say is that Amnesty—and this would be at the global level—has not yet taken a position that it is or is not constitutive of genocide. It's certainly something we're continuing to look at very

closely. We would absolutely agree that many of the very serious concerns that we and so many others have now documented certainly point in that direction, but we have not come to a final conclusion.

Absolutely, we have a situation of massive and widespread crimes against humanity. Even at that threshold, there is a range of obligations on the part of Canada and the international community to take action at all levels. Even while the debate about whether it is or is not genocide continues, there is nothing that should forestall robust, meaningful and much more forceful action than we've seen to date.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: If what Mr. Cotler said holds, which is that it does meet the definition of genocide, how does the responsibility to protect doctrine play here, Mr. Neve?

Mr. Alex Neve: I would very much echo the important comments that Irwin highlighted. I think that whenever we have debates about responsibility to protect, a lot of the focus goes to the end of that continuum, this notion of armed intervention, sending in the troops to respond to a situation of mass atrocities. Responsibility to protect is about so much more than that. It's about what is consistently short-circuited by the international community, the obligation to take preventive actions through a whole variety of means, be they sanctions or through very strong and forceful action at a multi-lateral level or through justice and accountability measures—all the things that for decades the international community has shied away from when it comes to China, trade and investment being more alluring than those sorts of preventive actions.

We need a very strong agenda on that front, with the kinds of steps through justice and accountability, universal jurisdiction, possibilities of individual sanctions, etc., and we need it now.

• (1350)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

I'd like to shift to the point of forced labour.

We know that an Australian institute, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, noted that 27 factories, nine of which are in Chinese provinces, are taking forced labour transfers of the Uighur people. We've heard of upwards of 80 companies, including Apple, Dell, Mercedes-Benz and Nike, that are benefiting from supply chains that are taking forced labour materials. What steps do you think businesses can do to prevent this from occurring? Second, what steps can governments take, in particular Canada?

I'd like to hear opinions from the panellists. Feel free, please.

Ms. Rayhan Asat: I'm happy to take this question.

I think we need to understand that Uighur forced labour has two unusual and defining characteristics. One is about the effort by the Chinese government to eliminate Uighur culture as a whole, but unlike the forced labour generated by human trafficking and drug cartels, Uighur forced labour is a government-engineered labour transfer scheme. Evidence suggests a highly coordinated system whereby state authorities select the labourers and oversee the forced labour directly.

In light of this, I think the tone has to be set very strongly from the top. Our politicians should make sure the public is very much aware of this. For consumers to demand change, they have to be aware of it.

I hope that in the Canadian Parliament there could be a strong advisory note like the ones we have within the State Department here. In addition to that, I hope there's a way we can ask our corporations to stop profiting from Uighur forced labour so that corporations can indirectly change the behaviour of the Chinese government.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll move to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for their testimony, especially Ms. Asat.

Ms. Asat, your testimony was very touching and very disturbing. Our hearts go out to you, to your brother and to your people.

In your testimony, you talked about child abductions. Do we know what happens to those children once they are abducted?

[English]

The Chair: We're going to suspend for a moment. The reason is that there are some issues with the interpretation, and with Ms. Asat and her mike, I think.

• (1350) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1355)

The Chair: To bring us back, we're requiring unanimous consent from everybody that we will forgo the interpretation of Ms. Asat because of technical difficulties.

I see everyone is in agreement. We can move forward, and we'll add time, of course, to Mr. Duceppe's time.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I was thanking you for your testimony, Ms. Asat. I was saying that our hearts go out to you, to your brother and to your people.

In your testimony, you talked about child abductions. Do we know what happens once they are abducted? Do you have any idea?

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Asat, can you not hear the question?

Ms. Rayhan Asat: No, the translation is not coming through.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That is unfortunate, because it was an important question for me.

I cannot ask Ms. Asat any questions. Is that correct?

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Ms. Asat, it's Erica Pereira again. Do you see the interpretation button on the bottom of your screen, the little globe?

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Oh, yes.

The Clerk: Click on that, and click "English".

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Okay, yes. It's all good. Sorry about that.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No problem.

Can you hear me now?

[English]

The Chair: Try again.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay.

I will start again, because I want you to know what I said.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their testimony today and for being here.

Ms. Asat, your testimony really touched me. I want you to know that our hearts go out to you, to your brother, and to your people. That is why we are here today.

I understand you mentioned child abductions. Do you have any idea what happens to those children after they are abducted?

[English]

Ms. Rayhan Asat: I think we all know that children's best interests are very much with their parents, but when they are taken away and placed in these state orphanage schools, basically they are in the state's care.

This is not the kind of government that we could trust to raise these kids with the values that their parents wished for them to be raised with. What happens oftentimes is that these kids, from a very young age, are subjected to political indoctrination that forgoes their language and their culture, and they just don't have any connection with who they are as Uighur people.

I think basically they are trying to raise these kids in a completely different setting that is very foreign to their culture. It truly breaks my heart, because I think that's also a very good way of destroying the culture, destroying the population, because these kids would not be growing up as Uighurs. I think in many countries we do have a dark history of this kind of practice, but again in China this is happening as we speak.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Ms. Asat, how will the pending U.S. supply chain legislation be structured? Can you explain it to us?

[English]

Ms. Rayhan Asat: Yes. Regardless of the fate of the pending legislation before the U.S. parliament, we do have actual legislation, called the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which criminalizes not just the companies but also senior executives who knowingly completely disregard the use of forced labour in the global supply chain.

I hope this specific legislation that caters to Uighur forced labour does get implemented, but regardless, we do have legislation. That's why the customs and border protection agencies have right now ramped up their pressure, and they are very seriously enforcing strong actions against the use of forced labour.

In fact, one thing I need to point out is that they also recently worked with the Hong Kong organization that has very sophisticated knowledge and data-sharing techniques to tackle and combat the use of forced labour in the global supply chain.

• (1400)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

I have a brief question for Mr. Cotler, whom I very much appreciate and respect a great deal.

Mr. Cotler, if nothing is done, is there not a risk that the situation will worsen and that in a few years, our inaction will have cost the lives of thousands of innocent people? I would like your opinion on that.

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler: My point on this is that indifference and inaction on our part will end up with our coming down on the side of the violator, coming down on the side of the victimizer and not on the side of the targeted victims. We have a responsibility to intervene and protect and secure justice for the victims and secure accountability for the violators under Magnitsky sanctions, lest we too, by our indifference and inaction, end up being complicit.

I want to say that since we have imposed Magnitsky sanctions under our Magnitsky legislation on perpetrators from Russia, from Venezuela, from Myanmar, from Saudi Arabia and from South Sudan, I cannot understand how we have yet to impose any Magnitsky sanctions on those officials involved in crimes against humanity and arguably in crimes against humanity that are constitutive of acts of genocide.

This is a responsibility, and we must act. We have the means to do so. We have not undertaken or implemented those means. Using Magnitsky sanctions is but one case study, and others have been mentioned by my two fellow witnesses.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Cotler.

This takes us to our last member for questions to this panel. Ms. McPherson, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

Thank you to all of our panellists. I can hear the emotion and the passion in your voices, and I appreciate that very, very much.

As parliamentarians, one of our key roles is to determine what the government should be doing as follow-up, so I'd like to start by asking Mr. Neve to fill us in on his final two comments on how he could see the Canadian government move forward, please.

Mr. Alex Neve: Thank you very much for that opportunity, Ms. McPherson.

The final two comments were very much focused on individual places of concern. I think there is obviously a need for strong multi-lateral action. There is the need to be working at the United Nations. There is the need to be canvassing what kinds of measures need to be brought into place around sanctions and the role of businesses and all of that.

At the same time, as Ms. Asat has powerfully reminded us, at the end of the day, this crisis is about what is happening to individuals and individual families, and we need to keep very much focused on what is possible in that regard as well.

I highlighted two situations with very strong Canadian connections where I hope we could see much more robust Canadian responses. The first was the case of three individuals, Ayub Mohammed, Salahidin Abdulahad and Khalil Mamut, who in the past were detained unlawfully at Guantanamo Bay. They have been released, forced into exile in Albania and Bermuda, and for more than five years now, their applications to be reunited with their wives and children, who are Canadian citizens, have been protracted and delayed, and the anguish and injustice that has befallen those individuals and families is frankly unconscionable. Canada could solve that situation in a few days or weeks, and I would urge that this happen right away.

The other is, of course, the case of Huseyin Celil, who has been, for 14 years now, unjustly imprisoned. This has been 14 years during which his four sons have grown up without him, 14 years of separation from his wife Kamila, and 14 years during which the Chinese government has refused a single consular visit, and now it's been four years with absolutely no news of his fate.

Canada needs to intensify its efforts. Prime Minister Trudeau should become involved in insisting that, at a minimum, a health and welfare visit be allowed without any further delay, and we need to look at some innovative strategies, such as appointing a well-connected special envoy who can begin a full-time effort to bring this 14-year tragedy to an end.

• (1405)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much, Mr. Neve.

I have another question in terms of the efforts the Canadian government has made to date. I know we have taken a bit of a soft approach with expressions of concern. Our interventions at the multi-lateral and bilateral levels have maybe not been as strong as we would like. We haven't seen that China has been particularly swayed by the soft diplomacy effort.

Mr. Cotler, could you talk a little about what you think would be a more appropriate diplomatic response for the Canadian government to take?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: I think as the Canadian government has held out as a priority for us the protection of a rules-based democratic international order, then we have a responsibility to hold to account those who are engaged in a massive assault on this rules-based international order.

As mentioned, the recent imposition of draconian national security legislation was, in my view, a watershed event, a crossing of a red line, an open frontal assault on the rule of law in violation of an international treaty that we have a responsibility to uphold. The U.K. signed a treaty that has been clearly violated, not to mention the criminalization of fundamental freedoms and the violation of the Hong Kong Basic Law and the like.

This takes me to the Uighurs. We are witnessing, and have been witnessing for some time in Xi Jinping's China—and I use that to distinguish it from the people of China, who are otherwise the targets of mass oppression—a state-orchestrated culture of criminality and corruption, and no less important, an impunity that will be underpinned and nourished if the community of democracies does not take concerted action.

That's why I'm pleased that we established an Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China to bring together parliamentarians from the community of democracies. A democracy alone, whether it be Australia or Canada or New Zealand or the like, can individually be bullied, but if we stand together as a concerted alliance of parliamentarians, a concerted intergovernmental alliance, what I would call at the very least, a "D10"—the G7 accompanied by Australia, India, South Korea, and I would add others—so that Magnitsky sanctions will be imposed in a concerted way, we can secure justice and accountability with whole-of-international-government democracies acting in concert.

The time has come to put Xi Jinping and the leadership of the Chinese government in the docket of the accused. The time has come for us to leave the targeted docket of Xi Jinping and become plaintiffs, advocates, claimants who protect the rules-based international order, who hold the Chinese leadership to account on behalf of the Chinese people and who take the necessary actions.

Alex has mentioned the particular individuals whom we can help at this point, whether Huseyin Celil or the three Uighurs who have been separated or Ekpar Asat, Rayhan's brother. We need to act as if these individuals are a looking glass into the larger crimes against humanity that continue to be perpetrated. If we don't act, they end up being perpetrated through our silence or indifference.

● (1410)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

That concludes our second panel.

On behalf of the committee members, I want to thank the three witnesses for their tremendous advocacy. I know that the Honourable Irwin Cotler was chair of this committee—

Go ahead, Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: I'm sorry to interrupt. Is that all the time we have for this panel?

The Chair: That is all the time we have for this panel.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: If we have specific questions for some of the panellists, can we put them in writing and propose that they submit their thoughts in writing to us?

The Chair: Yes. Witnesses are able to submit in writing to this committee. Members can also ask those questions.

We'll be suspending now. Thank you.

● (1410)

(Pause)

● (1430)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone. This is our third panel.

Thank you very much, Dr. Turpie, for your patience. Technology is a bumpy road. We all know that, and we're experiencing that more often than not, especially during this COVID-19 time.

I want to start off on that note. Should any technical challenges arise—for example, in relation to interpretation—or should a problem with your audio arise, please advise the chair immediately. The technical team will try to work with you to resolve those problems.

This is meeting number four of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today all three witnesses will be appearing by video conference. This video conference will be made available via the House of Commons website.

I will introduce our next three witnesses, who will make their statements in that same order.

First, from the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, we have Mehmet Tohti, executive director. From Canadians in Support of Refugees in Dire Need, we have Dr. Irene Turpie. Appearing as an individual, we have pharmacist Hasimu Ailixiati. I hope I pronounced that correctly. If I did not, I hope you will let us know—oh, sorry; our pharmacist will not be present. He is not able to make it today.

Mr. Tohti, you have six minutes for your opening statement, please.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti (Executive Director, Uyghurs Rights Advocacy Project): Thank you, Chair and honourable members, for the invitation.

During my parliamentary testimony on October 2, 2018, I stated that the textbook example of ethnic cleansing, collective punishment and dehumanization of Uighur people had become routine and I raised fear and alarm about what would be next. The alarm I referred to then was genocide against the Uighur people committed by China.

What is new since then? It seems to me that China has completed the phase of full-scale cultural genocide and has entered the extermination level of an entire ethnic group who owned the ancestral homeland known as East Turkestan, which was occupied by China in 1949.

Just imagine sterilizing 80% of Uighur women and holding 80% of Uighur males in either concentration camps or....

Hello?

The Chair: We can hear you.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: My own voice is coming back.

The Chair: We can hear you very clearly, so if you can overcome that, you can continue.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Okay.

They're sterilizing 80% of Uighur women, holding 80% of Uighur males in concentration camps, prisons, or in slavery in mainland Chinese factories, and separating Uighur children from their families. Uighurs will be erased within a span of only one generation.

Arkin Kurban, a man from Montreal, had 76 of his immediate and extended family members disappear. Abdukerim Seyit, a Uighur refugee in Toronto, had more than 30 of his family members locked up in camps, including his 25-year-old daughter. Four of his relatives were killed in the camps. Nuriam Abla is a Uighur Canadian living in Ontario; her oldest sister, Malikim Abla, 63 years old, was killed in a concentration camp with five of her immediate family members in the camps. My mother, 78 years old, and 38 of my relatives disappeared four years ago. Today I received a chilling computer message from an unknown Chinese agent, saying, with f-words, "Your f—ing mother is dead." The list is long.

I want you to visualize 13 tonnes of human hair. It takes more than 300,000 Uighur women's hair to make 13 tonnes. The Auschwitz memorial museum displayed piles of hair taken from Jewish victims after they were murdered in gas chambers. The Chinese state has just commercialized them by selling every organ of Uighur victims.

I won't go into details. Instead I would like to go to my own proposals.

Continued silence on the Uighur genocide is the tacit approval of genocide itself. The United Nations and government officials around the world are now on notice. The time is over for reasoned concerns raised privately with Chinese officials and within the scope of human rights while conducting business as usual. The scale and depth of evil the CCP is committing should shock the conscience of the civilized world, yet what we know so far is only a drop in the ocean.

I want you to remember that Uighurs are paying the highest price because Uighurs are seen by China as an obstacle to its dream plan of expansionism through the belt and road initiative.

Here are some proposals I would like to make for the least our government can do.

The committee needs to recognize the atrocities committed to Uighurs as a genocide and to lead the world's conscience to stop it. This committee has to issue a strong, actionable proposal to our government on the Uighur genocide. Let Xi Jinping and Beijing know that our government is under pressure from the Canadian public and parliamentarians alike and that we're united. A strong,

actionable proposal is necessary to strengthen the hand of our government to safeguard our national interests with China.

Impose Magnitsky sanctions, as others already mentioned. We severely undermine our own credibility by applying this act to some individuals from some countries but set it aside when it comes to China.

Ban all products coming from China that are associated with Uighur forced labour, as the U.S. proposed and did. The onus should be on the companies to prove that their products and supply chains are not related to forced labour.

Demand and pass an organ transplant bill to ban any human organs originating from China, as Israel, Spain and recently Belgium did.

Urge our ministry of immigration to accept the nearly 2,380 Uighur refugee families and stateless children trapped in Turkey or who are vulnerable in other countries, as they face deportation to China at any time.

Remind the Immigration and Refugee Board to accept the claims of Uighur refugees made here in Canada without further delay, as long as their Uighur identity is proven. There is no need to compel those Uighur refugees to tell their horrible stories in pain and in tears before their adjudicators. I have witnessed a number of such hearings at the IRB, and it is painful. For that reason, Sweden decided to accept all Uighurs as refugees collectively. This is the right move, because China is targeting all Uighurs, and all Uighurs are at risk indiscriminately.

● (1435)

CIC is still asking Uighur refugees to provide all official documents from China, which China has been denying, to process their family sponsorship program. For that reason alone, Uighur refugee families are shattered, divided without unification. Can we adjust some technical requirements like this to the actual situation on the ground and make it easier for the Uighur refugees to unite with their families without seeing double penalties?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tohti.

We were able to hear you very well. You'll have an opportunity to elaborate during questions from members.

Now we will move to Dr. Turpie for six minutes.

Dr. Irene Turpie (Canadians in Support of Refugees in Dire Need): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. It's a privilege to join you and to be able to speak on behalf of Canadians in Support of Refugees in Dire Need. This is a multidisciplinary, multifaith group.

I'm not going to apologize for repeating things you've already heard today, because I think they're worth repeating.

For some time now, our group in particular, as other groups, has been deeply concerned about the human rights situation in China. For the last six years at least, there have been credible and repeated reports of systematic and widespread repression of the Uighur people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of northwestern China.

Muslim Uighurs have been subjected to a ruthless campaigns of repression, population control, mass detention, forced labour and high-technology surveillance. They have been persecuted for practising their religion, a basic human right. Their children have been taken from them and placed in orphanages, which should be a red flag to us as Canadians.

A million Chinese Community Party officials have been forcibly billeted in Uighur homes. Most mosques have been destroyed and shuttered. The Uighur language has been banned in schools—again, something that we should remember carefully—and between one million people and three million people have been detained in concentration camps—or re-education centres, as they're called—where they are physically mistreated, subjected to psychological abuse and forced to learn Mandarin Chinese.

China's police deploy some of the world's most sophisticated surveillance technologies to control and restrict every aspect of the Uighurs' lives. Crowds are monitored with facial recognition cameras; all communications are intercepted and inspected with artificial intelligence programs; and individuals are classified, accounted for and tracked through DNA databases, fingerprints and voice prints.

However, it's two particularly cruel and crucial elements to this repression that are of particular concern to the CSRDN.

First, we are concerned about the many reports of forced birth control, sterilization, tubal ligation and abortion, which are dramatically changing the demographics of Xinjiang. In the last three weeks, there have been two complementary reports—and you've heard from Mr. Adrian Zenz this morning, and from the Associated Press—documenting these activities. The British Foreign Secretary made a comment in Parliament this weekend about this very thing, as you probably all know.

The results of these policies have been a huge decrease in the Uighur birth rate in three years.

Second, there is predatory practice of organ trafficking that for years has seen China engage in large-scale harvesting of human organs from prisoners to support a lucrative organ transplant program. Over the past year, we at CSRDN have waged a specific campaign against the growing information and the growing fear that China is using Uighur prisoners of conscience for their organs to support a booming trade in organ transplants. We have sent a letter to the United Nations, with the signatures of more than 1,000 physicians from North America on this petition.

Organ transplants, as we know, are often difficult to find in Canada, but they're easily available in China and are advertised internationally, with perfect matches based on DNA analysis available within three weeks of application, yet tracking the source of such organs is difficult and indeed deliberately deceptive. There is highly compelling evidence that the numbers are being falsified.

Last year, as you've already heard, the independent China Tribunal, which is based in London and led by Sir Geoffrey Nice, who previously led the prosecution for crimes against humanity of Slobodan Milosevic, unanimously concluded that China continues to rely heavily on forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience to fuel a billion-dollar-a-year organ transplant business.

• (1440)

We urge Canadian parliamentarians to unequivocally condemn these crimes against humanity and to take action to eliminate any possible Canadian involvement in Chinese organ harvesting. We ask you to act immediately to pass Bill S-204, which is an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act with regard to organ trafficking. This bill, as you know, despite having the unanimous support of both Houses, died at the end of the last Parliament. The bill, while not directly specifying China, would essentially bar Canadians from travelling abroad to purchase or receive organs for transplantation against the donor's will. It would amend our immigration laws to make a permanent resident or foreign national inadmissible to Canada if they participated in unsanctioned and unauthorized organ harvesting.

You have the power to fast-track Bill S-204 now and to strike an immediate, practical blow to China's genocidal treatment of the Uighur people.

• (1445)

The Chair: Thank you for your statements.

You will also have an opportunity through questions, Dr. Turpie, to continue with some of the testimony that I'm sure you would want to give.

We are going to commence with Mr. Sweet, for seven minutes.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I think it's worthwhile repeating in every session that our concern is mainly for the Uighur people, but we also want to identify the perpetrators as the Chinese Communist Party and not the innocent Chinese citizens, many of whom have immigrated here and made great, positive contributions to Canada. Our main concern is with the regime of Xi Jinping, the CCP, and their totalitarian nature.

Thank you, Dr. Turpie, for putting a number to the amount of Han Chinese operatives from the CCP who are put into homes of Uighurs. It's been mentioned by other witnesses, but I had no idea it was so pervasive as a million. Do you have a source for the number that you mentioned?

Dr. Irene Turpie: I personally don't have the source, but I can certainly get it for you, Mr. Sweet. I got it from a very reliable source.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you very much, Dr. Turpie. I appreciate that.

Dr. Irene Turpie: I will send it to you.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay.

Mehmet Tohti, it's good to see you again, sir. I think of you every time we talk about the tragedy of the two Michaels and Huseyin Celil isn't mentioned, after his 13 or 14 years of incarceration.

We had testimony here earlier, Mr. Tohti, that the organ harvesting of the Uighurs actually predated that of the Falun Gong, and yet we didn't find out about it until long after. Why do you think that was the case?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Huseyin Celil's case is troubling, because when you look at the statements from the government officials, and when we talk about the two Michaels, despite Huseyin Celil's case being exactly the same.... If you look at the charges laid by the Chinese government, it is about state secrets or endangering state security. It's a similar pattern of charges laid against all three Canadians, but somehow we have forgotten Huseyin Celil. Actually, that has given a kind of green light for the Chinese government to continue denying consular access. As you know, the Chinese government claims that he is a Chinese citizen, despite the Chinese nationality law telling us otherwise.

Because of the two Michaels' case, we are debating about China in the media and in our political setting, but because of the mistakes we made to save Huseyin Celil, now, consequently, we see the detention of the two Michaels. The two Michaels' case did not just happen overnight. For Canada, somehow just raising the case within the bilateral meeting is seen as enough. They raised the case, like that's fulfilling the job. In fact, we did not go after Huseyin Celil's case and enforce our law, because he's a Canadian citizen, to save him. That is the tragedy in our politics.

• (1450)

Mr. David Sweet: We had two witnesses earlier today speak about the fact that we need to find some way for the Muslim nations of the world to realize we need their voice. We have two large Muslim communities: we have the Rohingya, being persecuted by the Burmese government, which is manipulated by the CCP, and then we have the Uighurs.

Can you give this committee some idea about how we could build bridges to have these other Muslim nations be more vocal? One of the witnesses who mentioned this said that's exactly what the CCP wouldn't want, because their belt and road initiative would be very much hampered if these nations rose up and demanded some justice for the Uighur people.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Thank you. It is an excellent question.

I partly disagree with the previous panellist's conclusion. If you look at the reality now, Chinese money is coming from western markets, not only from selling their product, but at the same time from our stock markets and our investments. So we have the upper-hand position to impose or enforce our demands on China, just because China's government has for a long time applied the divide and rule policy to divide western nations from one another, and now we are trying to get back on the bases to tackle against China.

One thing I can suggest the Canadian government should do is.... Recently the U.S. government started an initiative, an alternative to the Chinese belt and road. Canada should withdraw its investment—a very small investment, merely \$180 million or \$280 million—from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, join the United States, show the alternative to those countries in central Asia and the Muslim world, and show them some future for mutual benefit-based future development. That can be the best option.

Mr. David Sweet: You mentioned that you got a call about your mother. How much is the Uighur community being intimidated here in Canada, in a free nation like Canada, by Chinese Communist Party operatives here on this soil?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: This case has been reported to our government since early 2000. Just imagine. I left my home country in 1991. Since then, I have not had a chance to visit my mother and my siblings or any of my relatives. I was totally blocked, and my relatives, including my mother, were totally blocked from having access to a passport to come to see me. So the intimidation and threat applied to Uighurs have a long history.

Initially, in 2000, there were website attacks, email or malware, that kind of thing; now, they directly hold your family members hostage. If you look at the records from Global Affairs, I have been raising this issue of hostage diplomacy for 10 years. The Chinese government is taking Uighur families hostage and forcing us to act as the Chinese government wants us to act. So it is quite a long history now.

Just this morning, I received a Twitter message from a Chinese guy, and then he deleted it. He said, "Your effing mother is dead already." Such vulgar language. So rude.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Ms. Vandenbeld now, for seven minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much, Dr. Turpie and Mr. Tohti.

I'd like to follow up a little. First of all, please know our sympathy to you about your mother, but also to so many people who have that fear and suffering. The intimidation and harassment.... You went so far as to say that they're using family members as hostages. First of all, let me just say that we really admire your courage in speaking out.

I know a lot of people would be afraid and are afraid. One thing that was remarked to me when I was talking about this previously to some Canadian students is that they don't know about the Uighurs. If they knew that the products they're consuming are made with forced labour, I think the Canadian public would certainly take action on that. But there is less awareness than there is, for instance, with the Rohingya and others. Is this in part because of the harassment of journalists, CSOs and Uighur activists? If that is the case, what is it that Canada...?

We heard this morning that we could help CSOs in other countries to speak out. What can we do to protect and empower people like you, who are so courageous in being willing to speak out even if it risks their families?

• (1455)

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Thank you, Anita. Is this a question for me?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: It is, yes.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Canada should, as earlier speakers have mentioned, just look at the overall China policy. Canada should have some mechanism to protect dissidents like me and others because we are speaking up about the atrocities committed by one of the strongest authoritarian regimes. It is not easy, as you said. You have to sacrifice everything just to tell one word of truth, one sentence of truth. That is what we have been doing, all exiled Uighurs and the Tibetans.

There is a need for protection. If you look at the Uighur human rights policy act passed by the United States, there's a provision to protect the American citizens of Uighur origin and their family members, and we don't have that kind of protection.

Oftentimes many politicians and others think that China is a normal country. China is not a normal country. When we deal with other countries around the world, we have a rules-based approach and freedom and democracy, kind of universal values, and we can use those values to approach them, but China is a totally different regime. Deception, cheating and undermining western democracy are the core mission of the Chinese Communist Party, so speaking up against this regime is a great risk.

In this regard, Canada should have at least a legislative provision to protect not only Uighurs, but Tibetans, the pro-democracy China movement and others. This is a huge chunk of the Canadian community.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

For those Uighurs who are outside of Canada, you cited a number. You said 2,380 Uighurs are in real danger of facing deportation back to China. We heard this morning that there are about 30,000 Uighurs around the world, outside of Xinjiang. Where is this 2,380 number coming from?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: That is 2,380 families, the families in dire need. Yes, there are maybe 30,000 or 40,000. There is no clear statistic on this; I don't know the exact number. In November 2017, our organization sent two Canadians to Turkey just to interview and talk with people about their problems. Most of the children born in Turkey became stateless because the Chinese government did not offer them any identity papers. The Turkish government just gave them a birth certificate. The Turkish government did not give them any identity documents, so they became stateless, born in stateless status.

For Uighur families, these 2,380 vulnerable families, the husbands are in concentration camps or have disappeared. Mothers, single mothers, are left without any support. The UNHCR office closed. There is no place to apply for protection. There's an immigration office in Turkey, under the jurisdiction of the interior ministry. It is not like the impartial authority we have in Canada, the Immigration and Refugee Board. So then they apply to this Turkish

immigration office. It is up to the political parties to evaluate the relationship between China and their own interests. If there is some loan agreement or any financial interest, they easily deny the application. When the application is denied, they have to be deported back. For that reason, Uighurs cannot apply for Turkish immigration, and there is no UNHCR office. If you remember, in 2018, I raised this issue before this committee.

At least our Prime Minister's father brought nearly 3,000 Tibetans in the 1970s. Those Tibetans became very good Canadians. In these circumstances, why can we not help those vulnerable Uighurs? Altogether, across Canada, we have maybe 1,500 to 2,000 Uighur Canadians, including children.

The Chinese government banned our language, history, everything. This population is not sustainable to keep our culture. You are talking about thousands of years of culture. Western countries became the only venue for us to preserve our culture, teach our language and keep our culture for the next generation; otherwise, China will totally erase them. In this regard, Canada should help bring in those 2,300 Uighur families.

• (1500)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I'll just use my last 30 seconds for Dr. Turpie to weigh in on this.

I know you've done a lot of work on this, too.

The Chair: Dr. Turpie, you have about 20 seconds.

Dr. Irene Turpie: What can I say to improve upon what Mehmet has said?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Monsieur Simard for seven minutes.

Welcome.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to thank you, Mr. Tohti and Ms. Turpie.

You are doing essential work. We must inform civil society of the unacceptable situations being experienced by the Uyghurs. That is the key. If we want to change this situation, we must constantly keep civil society informed. I do not think we hear enough about what is happening. In particular, you talked about sterilization and organ harvesting. This is particularly striking in its infamy.

Mr. Tohti, I was also very touched by your story. You said you were the target of threats. Earlier, you talked about this hostage diplomacy that has developed over the past 10 years.

I would like to know if this state of affairs is at all documented. In your opinion, what could the Canadian government do to help improve this situation, at the very least, or to provide you with some support?

[*English*]

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: One thing I have to emphasize here is that the last visit I made to Ottawa was my 117th visit in 20 years. I have spoken with government officials at Global Affairs and all high-level officials. On January 17, for example, I gave to the sanctions division of Global Affairs the list of Chinese officials to be sanctioned. On March 9, I spent nearly an hour and a half with Minister Champagne during a luncheon on China-Canada and an evaluation meeting on the Canada-China relationship. I told all horrible stories. On December 11, 2018, I chatted briefly with the Honourable Chrystia Freeland. I frequently speak with Omar Alghabra. He's in my riding, my neighbourhood, and when I wrote a letter to him, he said he conveyed the message to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

There's no excuse that politicians in Canada do not know about this. They know all about this. I am proof of that. I personally spoke to them and personally raised this issue. But even if you speak a thousand times, if they do not want to listen, or if they do not want to take action....

I am simply one Canadian. I have only one vote. I am a taxpayer. Take especially the \$180 million for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the bank that funds the Chinese government's imperial dream for expansionism. Why should my tax dollars fund Chinese expansionism and the suffering of Uighurs today just because of the Chinese belt and road initiative? My tax dollars support the Chinese persecution of my own people.

As I mentioned, I have raised this case more than anyone else in Canada, on my own time and at my own expense. Just for a half-hour meeting, I travelled 10 hours to Ottawa. Honestly, I don't know what else we can do. We've testified at Parliament. This is my fourth testimony in this Parliament. We've raised this issue. There is a record.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Tohti, if I understand you correctly, economic imperatives sometimes lead us to turn a blind eye to the atrocities that you have thoroughly condemned.

Often, in order to tip the balance, we have to alert public opinion, which succeeds in influencing public decision-makers and forces them to take action. Do you feel that you have sufficient support to inform the public of the atrocities that are currently being committed against the Uyghurs?

[*English*]

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Thank you.

There are frequent media reports on the atrocities against Uighurs. I think the majority of Canadians already know what is going on there. Probably it is part of the genetic code of all Canadians: We are not that politically active. Because there are so many

atrocities taking place around the world, one after the other, we cannot catch up.

Also, many Canadians don't grasp the danger that the Chinese Communist Party poses to our future, to future generations. Many politicians in the rest of the world have just recently woken up and confessed that they have been naive. If politicians full of information have been naive, we cannot blame Canadians.

Now the information is flowing, and this testimony in this committee is important. We have to give much greater tasks to our government with our policy proposals. Government should lead with action.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Throughout our history in Canada, we have learned to recognize what cultural genocide is. The term is particularly used to capture the unjust way in which indigenous people have been treated.

According to the information you are sharing with us, can we say that this is no longer a cultural genocide, but a genocide plain and simple, with a slightly different objective? It is not a question of measuring the atrocities, but it seems to me that, if we were able to designate this situation as a genocide plain and simple, perhaps there would be greater resonance among decision-makers.

Do you share that view?

[*English*]

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: I totally agree. There's no adjective needed to describe it. There's no "cultural" or "demographic"; it is genocide, period.

Dr. Irene Turpie: I would second that. I don't think we need any more evidence to call this "genocide". I think we Canadians should be very sensitive to what has been happening to the Uighur people.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we're moving to Ms. McPherson, for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

In the testimony we've heard from all of our witnesses, including the two we have today, the underlying thing I'm seeing is this frustration that there has been such a slow acknowledgement, a lack of movement, a lack of action on behalf of the Canadian government, and I guess I could say on behalf of the international community.

I want to dive into a few different things. I thought that maybe I would start with you, Dr. Turpie. You talked a little bit about organ harvesting. Of course, we know that this is a horrendous affront to human rights. We know that the Chinese government has done widespread collection of DNA data and other personal information. Can you confirm, or assume I guess, that the gathering of this data is for organ-harvesting purposes?

Dr. Irene Turpie: I can't confirm that it is only for organ-harvesting purposes, but if you have the DNA makeup of prisoners in a re-education centre, what would you normally use that for? Certainly I know they use it for tracing and they use it for following people. I believe that it is also used for organ harvesting.

Ms. Heather McPherson: If I can follow up on that, do you feel that the impacts of that have increased, or accelerated, during the COVID-19 crisis, not necessarily the organ harvesting, but the Chinese government using COVID-19 as cover to continue to accelerate its attack on the Uighur people?

• (1510)

Dr. Irene Turpie: I honestly don't know. I heard a little bit about that this morning. I know there are concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus in these detention centres. Certainly if people are being forced to work in areas where they don't have protection, that is not what one would call in the best interests of those people.

Does that answer your question?

Ms. Heather McPherson: It does.

What I was looking at more was the use of the pandemic to give China that space to amplify or to accelerate its attacks on Uighur people because there isn't the same capacity for oversight within the international community at this time. We're all very focused on our own communities.

Dr. Irene Turpie: That might be the case. I have not seen any information to that end. I don't know if Mehmet has. I just know that forced organ harvesting is an affront to any human right that I know of, and we should do everything we can to stop it.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Of course.

I'd like comments from both of you on this next question. In terms of the Canadian response to Uighurs who are seeking asylum, particularly during the pandemic, what would be the key things you'd like the Canadian government to do in terms of making sure that we are providing as much support for asylum seekers as we can, particularly knowing the challenges that we have within global travel at the moment?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: I personally prefer to follow the procedure and the law. It is quite clear.

I raised the issue of Uighurs because it is a very special situation. Uighur refugees are making claims here, and they are leaving their relatives or spouses and children behind in some insecure countries. Those spouses are facing the danger of repatriation to China at any time. For that reason, not only is the reunification of family a better option for them, but at the same time it is important to secure their safety. Now, because of COVID-19, everything is postponed and it is a lengthy period. This is one dimension I want to emphasize.

Second, I've participated in a number of hearings. It is heartbreaking. People are in tears and in pain, recalling the atrocities that their family members and they personally have gone through. Why are we compelling those people to repeat this pain and horror in front of an interpreter and adjudicator? The whole world knows what's going on. The whole world knows that China's government is targeting all Uighurs indiscriminately.

Sweden declared it would accept all Uighurs as refugees as long as they prove their identity as Uighur. Why don't we follow the example of Sweden and at least give those people some comfort?

Dr. Irene Turpie: I don't really think that the COVID pandemic should stop that. I think that people can be quarantined where they come from and they can be quarantined when they come here to

Canada. Apart from the bureaucratic problems, I don't think there should be any problem in bringing in refugees.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Okay.

In particular, when you talk about the children who have been born and are now stateless, can I assume that you would see Canada playing an important role in ensuring that those children are given state status in Canada?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: We have documentation of 125,000 pages of personal information during the interviews and surveys we did two years ago. I dispatched them to community members in Turkey. There are heartbreaking stories. We heard their testimonies, how many members of their families were lost, disappeared or were killed or interned in concentration camps. Those people were left without any support.

Most importantly, there isn't any venue for them to seek any assistance. For example, the UNHCR office closed in Turkey. The Turkish interior minister controls the immigration office. When they seek asylum, they're afraid if they are rejected because of the political game between Turkey and China. Now, as you know, Turkey is derailing its position from NATO and the western alliance. It is becoming much closer to Russia and China, and is receiving financial assistance from China. They have become a political chip to play, to victimize. For that reason, there might be 20,000, 30,000, but realistically, at least 2,300 to 2,400 families with multiple children. They're very vulnerable. Can we offer help to them? That is my concern.

• (1515)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to go to a short round right now. We're going to afford each party three minutes.

We're going to start with Ms. Khalid, for three minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Tohti and Dr. Turpie, for your testimony today.

Mr. Tohti, I just want to say that last year I was at MuslimFest in Mississauga. I just want to thank you and the Uighur community here in Canada for showcasing the beauty of the culture and traditions. I understand your frustrations, but you are absolutely having an impact. You are absolutely raising your voice and you're preserving that culture. I thank you for that.

I will go to Dr. Turpie really quickly.

Dr. Turpie, in December 2019, a statement was made by representatives of the Chinese government in the Xinjiang province that people had been released or that they had graduated from these re-education camps. I'm hoping that you can tell us what that was all about.

Then also, we heard reports of Han Chinese who are settling in Xinjiang. We also heard that Uighur communities are being moved out of that province. Can you explain what this movement of people is all about and whether or not people are being allowed, ultimately, to leave these re-education centres? Thank you.

Dr. Irene Turpie: You have to understand that the information we get from this province is very, very limited. Some of the press reports that we have depend on some of the academics we hear from, and they depend on personal reports and personal witnesses such as you've heard today.

It's my understanding that people are being billeted in the homes of the Uighurs. Presumably, again, they're taking over their homes. They're taking over their jobs, as the Uighur men, in particular, are in these detention re-education centres.

I cannot imagine what qualifications they need to graduate from these re-education centres. Presumably they have admitted their allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party. Presumably they have learned to speak some Mandarin Chinese. Presumably they have denied, perhaps, their religion. I don't think that any of it is good, for sure, to graduate from one of these places.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Mr. Tohti, would you have some comments on that?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: In my opening, I just gave as examples three Canadians. I talked about the family members of three Canadians. None of them, none of their family members, have been released from the concentration camps. Arkin Kurban lives in Montreal, and 76 of his extended family members are still in concentration camps; 38 of my relatives are still in concentration camps. Another lady, Nuriyam Abla, has relatives in concentration camps. You can talk with Uighur Canadians from coast to coast. No one reported that their family members have been released from the concentration camps.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move to Mr. Chiu for three minutes.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for speaking to this committee here.

Mr. Tohti, as Han Chinese, I can tell you that I am not proud of what the CCP did, has done and is doing in the name of China. I and many, many other Canadians are very sympathetic to your people's plight. We're working very hard to stop it and undo some of the damage it has done.

In my riding, there is a "highway to heaven", a large, long stretch of road that aligns religious institutions and faith gathering places. Among them, three are classified in the Muslim faith. I've been trying to bring the suffering of the Uighur people to their practitioners' attention. Literally, these have fallen on deaf ears. Why is that the case? How do you suggest to counter that to make people more aware and be on your side?

• (1520)

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Thank you for the question. Thank you for your support, first of all.

As I said, we don't have a large population; from coast to coast to coast there are 1,500 Uighurs, not families. All of them are new immigrants. They have some language problems. They are barely getting by and are working to support their families. We don't have that many activists. We can't just, wherever we are, do advocacy work and explain in a public gathering with public speakers. That is one issue. I'm running from place to place. This is one element.

It is part of our community. We cannot catch up at every event in every community. We are doing our best just to spread the word in Canada, just to educate our fellow Canadian friends, citizens across the country, and work with different faith groups.

I went to your riding a number of times. There is one mosque. The Islamic Institute of Toronto, I think, is in your riding as well. I went there for a conference. I spoke with the leading voices there.

We are constantly working, but at the same time it is really difficult to get rid of people's preconceptions on China or the Chinese government.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move to Monsieur Simard for three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Tohti, I always had the impression that one of the driving forces behind political action was outrage. When we are outraged by a situation, we are more inclined to take action. After your testimony, I feel outraged. Outrage is good, but it's even better when it's followed by concrete action.

You may find my question trite. You just said that there are not enough activists to inform people of the problematic situation being experienced by the Uyghurs. As an opposition legislator, but also as a citizen, what could I do, in concrete terms, to help you? What tangible steps or strategies could I take to help inform the public about what the Uyghurs are going through?

[*English*]

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Thank you.

I think a number of our parliamentarians have on their personal websites a Uighur window, or an instant update on the situation of the Uighurs, and they post it on their own parliamentary or personal website. This is one way. Honourable David Kilgour, he has on his website one Uighur window, and every day he is updating it and spreading the news. Maybe you can do this.

Second, during a town hall meeting with your own constituents in your own riding you can talk about this. This is about our future. I try to emphasize this. I have a son, just two weeks old. My son is going to grow up here in Canada. He's going to live in this world. If China becomes a global boss with this ambitious plan, what kind of world will our future generations live in? It is not about the Uighurs' situation or tragedy. It is about all of us.

We would like to have a peaceful world for our next generation. We have the rule of law, freedom and basic democratic values, and we have to preserve those. China is a challenge to our values. You have to look at the issue from a broader perspective and educate your ridings and the people around you. Just talk about this issue. Maybe this is the best way to start.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds to follow up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: What explains the vehemence of the Chinese government's actions against the Uyghurs? Does the plan for emancipation or political autonomy partly explain these actions?

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: China wants to eliminate the Uighurs and to take our ancestral land. Uighurs want to keep our land and to keep our national identity. This is the struggle. If you ask all the Uighurs abroad, they want to go for an independent state. There is no way to live together with the people, because many Chinese people—

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We're going to move to Ms. McPherson for three minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I am going to ask two questions and get both of you to respond to them, if you wouldn't mind. The first is, compared to other western nations, how would you describe Canada's response to the Government of China's actions against the Uighur population? Are there examples from the international community that you'd like us to look at quite closely, international examples of where things have gone right and things that we could emulate?

If you could both touch on that, just to finish off today, that would be wonderful.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Dr. Turpie, go ahead.

Dr. Irene Turpie: Okay.

You know what? Gandhi said that every journey begins with one small step. I think we've given you lots of ideas today about things you can do. I certainly hope you'll consider Bill S-204.

Other countries, I think Sweden is one and the U.K. is one.... I think even the United States has put sanctions and things into action. There's no reason Canada shouldn't do that.

It would be wonderful if Canada had the courage to call this a genocide, which it did not do for the Rohingya. It was left to a little African country to do that. I think we could stand up for that.

In particular, please do something about the forced organ harvesting. I'm a physician. I took an oath that I would never do harm. I wouldn't harm patients. If I stay silent on this, if we stay silent on

this, we are doing harm. Please let's do something about forced organ harvesting.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: One thing Canada has done right in the international arena, just like the UN office in Geneva, it has frequently joined other western allies to raise the Uighur issue against the Chinese government.

We talk about concrete action. We lack concrete action. We can follow the U.K. and the United States.

Most importantly, as I said, Canada has a lot of soft power to exercise. If China wants to eradicate Uighurs, why don't you help the Uighurs? If China wants to eradicate our culture, why don't we build a Uighur institute? It is important to understand the experience of Uighurs to understand China.

In using that soft power we could do so many things. The Magnitsky bill.... The organ harvesting and forced labour.... It is our obligation. We have to do this, not for Uighurs, but for ourselves. Otherwise, we are complicit in genocide.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: That concludes our third panel.

I want to thank you, Dr. Turpie, for your advocacy, and you, Mr. Tohti, for your heartfelt testimony, for sharing your knowledge and your personal experience. We as a committee commend you for your courage and bravery.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: I live in Mississauga, by the way. We've met a number of times.

The Chair: Yes. Viva Mississauga.

We're going to suspend now for 30 minutes to have the room cleaned to COVID-19 standards.

• (1525)

(Pause)

• (1615)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

We've all come to learn that technology is never easy. As we've said, it's quite a bumpy road. We are trying to get one of our witnesses online, and we're having some trouble with that.

To everybody who can hear and see us, welcome. This is the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's witnesses are appearing by video conference. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Should any technical challenges arise, and I don't say that lightly, in relation to interpretation, for example, or should a problem with your audio arise, please advise the chair immediately. The technical team will work to resolve them.

Consecutive Kazakh interpretation will be provided by Gani Stambekov via Zoom. Translation is consecutive because of interpreter availability and technology considerations. There needs to be six booths for a consecutive third language, and because of physical distancing, it is only possible to have four booths. When asking questions, please pause to allow for interpretation time. We're trying to hold the maximum amount of speaking time to about two minutes before the consecutive interpretation then starts by Gani via Zoom. Thank you for that.

Our fourth panel will be going until 5:45 p.m. today. Then I understand we have consensus from all members that we will go in camera for the last 15 minutes.

On that note, I'd like to welcome our witnesses in the order they'll be making their opening statements. We have Mr. Chris MacLeod, lawyer and founding partner, Cambridge LLP.

Welcome, Mr. MacLeod.

We have Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai, Uighur rights activist. We are working to make sure that Kamila can come online.

We have as an individual Ms. Jewher Ilham, author and human rights activist.

As well, we have as an individual Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay, East Turkic minority activist and recipient of the 2020 International Women of Courage Award.

I apologize for my mispronunciation of your names. You will be able to share with us the correct pronunciation when you have an opportunity to speak.

We will begin with Mr. MacLeod. If we can get Ms. Talendibaevai online, they will be sharing their time.

You have six minutes, please, Mr. MacLeod.

Mr. Chris MacLeod (Lawyer, Founding Partner, Cambridge LLP, As an Individual): Thank you.

I've been acting as legal counsel for Huseyin Celil and his family since his detention in 2006.

First, thank you for covering this important topic. I appreciate time is tight so I will speak quickly to cover as much ground as I can, and then turn it over to Kamila, Huseyin's wife.

Let's begin. I think it's worth giving some background on Huseyin Celil's case. I know that some members were not in the House in 2006. I know that member of Parliament David Sweet was and has been active and engaged in the file.

Huseyin Celil was raised in northwestern China. He's a Muslim Uighur within the Uighur community. He speaks out in China in favour of his ability to practise his language and his faith. For this he faces persecution and detention in China. Ultimately in the late 1990s he leaves and treks across Asia into Turkey. In the city of Istanbul he declares and is given UNHCR refugee status. This time he and his wife Kamila and their three boys ultimately immigrate to Canada as UNHCR refugees in 2001, become permanent residents and ultimately Canadian citizens.

In 2006 Huseyin, Kamila and their three boys decide now that they are Canadian citizens to travel on Canadian passports to Uzbekistan, with temporary travel permits obtained from Uzbekistan, to visit Kamila's family. While there one of their boys falls ill. Huseyin decides, in accordance with proper regulations, to renew that travel visa. When he goes to the appropriate authorities in Uzbekistan to renew that on his Canadian passport he's red-flagged because Uzbekistan and China, unknown to Huseyin at the time, have a treaty. They're part of the Shanghai besh, seven countries that share information on political dissidents.

Huseyin, on March 27, is detained in Uzbekistan. There's a period of about 90 days when he's in Uzbekistan, and people in Canada and on the ground are trying to determine what to do. The Uighur community in Canada is loud and clear, as are we to the Canadian government, that this is the moment to get Huseyin out. It's China that wishes to obtain him. Ultimately, Uzbekistan transfers Huseyin to China in or around July 2006. He faces a trial. He is sentenced to death, and ultimately through the interventions of the minister of foreign affairs at the time, Peter MacKay, that death sentence is commuted to a life sentence.

The Canadian government has never had consular access to Huseyin Celil. Kamila and the family had updates from Huseyin's family in northwestern China up until 2016 when all went dark. We haven't had any word from Huseyin's family there. We've never had direct communication with him. This is really a long-standing Canadian tragedy where we have a Canadian citizen detained in China, who didn't travel to China on a Canadian passport, or at all. He went to neighbouring Uzbekistan as a Canadian citizen to visit his in-laws. There, and this is where we have a case of rendition, Huseyin was ultimately transported by the Uzbeks to China, or the Chinese came into Uzbekistan and picked him up and transported him there.

The trial was had. At the time, then prime minister Harper ordered the embassy staff out of Beijing to go to the courtroom and wait every day to find out when there would be a trial and try to gain access. They ultimately were never allowed in to hear the trial. An appeal was taken.

That's been the long and unnecessary saga of Huseyin's case.

We've always asked, and I'm going to ask again, for two things. One is that the Prime Minister appoint a special envoy specifically tasked with seeking the release and return of Huseyin Celil. We want a special envoy, as opposed to the embassy and the ambassador, because the single task of the envoy will be to seek the release and return of Mr. Celil, figure out what needs to be done to make that happen. It's been 14 long years.

• (1620)

As for Kamila, I'm not sure if we have her in the room at the moment, but we'll now go into additional details about the challenges she's faced with her four young children. The four boys, Hussein's children, Kamila's children, haven't seen their father in 14 years. One, Zubeyir, was actually born after his father's detention. This is a Canadian tragedy. It's been long languishing. When the crack-down on the Uighur community in northwestern China commenced, we already had no consular access. We've now had absolutely zero information since 2016 on his state and his situation.

Number one, a special envoy should be appointed by the Prime Minister seeking Huseyin Celil's release and return. The second would be that we have all-party co-operation in this regard. I recall when the Conservatives were in power, Minister MacKay commuted the sentence from death to a life sentence. Member of Parliament Sweet and member of Parliament Kenney were two active Conservatives at the time. Member of Parliament Gould has also been active, but we haven't had non-partisan action where all members of the House in unanimity are all rowing in the same direction.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacLeod.

We want to ensure that Ms. Sauytbay has some understanding of what the other witnesses are bringing forward. I'm going to ask our Kazakh interpreter, Gani, if he would be able to do a one-minute synopsis after each of the witnesses speaks. Would you be able to do that, Gani?

Mr. Gani Stambekov (Interpreter, As an Individual): Yes, sir.

The Chair: Gani is going to do one minute on what Mr. MacLeod had to say right now, and then we'll move to the next witness. He'll do this after the next witness as well.

Ms. Ilham has six minutes. She is an author and human rights activist.

Ms. Ilham.

Ms. Jewher Ilham (Author, Human Rights Activist, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having me today.

My name is Jewher Ilham. I come to you today not as a scholar or expert on Chinese politics and policy, but as the daughter of someone who was, and still is, a victim of human rights abuses targeting Uighurs in China.

My father is Ilham Tohti, the 2019 Sakharov Prize laureate. He also has been recognized with numerous other awards. He has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. I haven't seen him since February 2, 2013, when I left him in a tiny white room at the Beijing airport and boarded a plane to the U.S. We were on our way to Indiana University, where my father had been invited as a visiting scholar. I was 18 years old.

At first I refused to go without him. I did not think leaving my father alone at the airport under those circumstances was a good idea. I didn't know what was going to happen to him. Would he be interrogated? Would he be tortured? Would I ever see him again? A million questions were running through my mind. He insisted that I get on the plane. Soon I was bound for the U.S. where I knew no one, had nothing and did not even speak the language. I was terrified to go to an unfamiliar place and start a new life from scratch, but today I'm not here to talk about myself; I'm here to talk about my father and the Uighur people.

My father was born in 1969 in Artush, a small town in the Uighur region known for producing some of the area's top business people. He was a successful businessman who spoke many languages, as well as being a highly regarded economics professor at Minzu University in Beijing. He's well read, a compassionate soul and a good father. My father was, and always will be, a firm believer in equality for all people.

Prior to his arrest in 2014, my father devoted most of his time to promoting dialogue among ethnic minorities and the Han majority in China. He travelled to many countries, discovering that diverse people can live together in harmony. He wanted that for China. My father created the website Uyghurbiz.com as a place for the free exchange of ideas. He hoped it would help Han people understand the many aspects of Uighur life, the rich culture, the beautiful language, as well as the social and economic disparities. He also gave many interviews in China and around the world. He published articles to draw attention to this issue and promote conversation.

This was all in a good faith effort to counter China's state-backed media and school textbooks that portrayed the Uighurs as entertainers, pickpockets, thieves and now violent extremists.

My father was detained for three days after we shared our last goodbye at the Beijing international airport. He spent the next 11 months under house arrest. While I remained in Indiana, we spoke at least three times a day, making sure the other one was safe and adjusting well to our new circumstances. He warned me that he would probably be arrested. A few months later he was taken away, on January 15, 2014.

I was born into my father's world. I had no choice. While living as a young girl in China, I experienced the intrusions of state security into our home, the constant surveillance, the restrictions on schooling, the detainment in the countryside and the death threats multiple times, all because my father was dedicated to promoting peaceful dialogue between Han Chinese and Uighurs.

In 2013, the choice to leave China was mine. With that choice came the opportunity to keep my father's work alive. He knew that the Chinese would attempt to silence him by labelling him a separatist and locking him away in solitary confinement. In fact, my father was the first political prisoner since the Cultural Revolution to be given a life sentence in China. I want to emphasize he was trying to bring people together, yet he was charged and convicted as a separatist.

When this all started, I felt I was among the few, but by 2017, I came to understand that I was part of a generation of Uighur children who did not know where their parents were.

Over one million Uighurs are now estimated to be locked up in concentration camps. As you likely know, that has been documented through surveillance satellite photos, leaked videos, leaked party documents and the testimony of survivors.

• (1630)

You already heard from Mr. Adrian Zenz earlier today about using forced sterilization to reduce or even eliminate the Uighur population in western China.

This needs to stop. The systematic targeting of Uighur people is a complete destruction of my culture, my tradition, my language, my religion and my ethnicity. Many people ask whether my father has been transferred to a camp. It is the type of question so many of my fellow Uighurs are being asked these days, and my answer is that I don't know where he is and I don't even know if he is alive. No one has had contact with him for almost three years and I just don't know.

But I do know that my father is a wise man who knew that unity around a common cause is more powerful than isolation. The time has come for all of us to find each other and unite in our demands for freedom. With that, I offer a few calls to action that Canada can take.

First, stop allowing the Chinese government to politicize the situation of thousands, of millions, of Uighurs being held in camps. We all know that this is not an internal affair. This is a global mission, and Global Affairs Canada needs to be raising the issue on a regular basis with its counterparts in Beijing. It must let them know that the Government of Canada will not tolerate these human rights abuses. They need to call on China to close the camps and stop the persecutions, and on a personal note, release my father, Ilham Tohti.

Second, they need to speak up on behalf of the estimated over one million prisoners in the camp. Two years ago this committee urged the Government of Canada to address this escalating crisis and over that time the Chinese government has continued to lock up people like my father and silence others. I urge the Government of Canada to create formal legislation such as the recently passed bipartisan Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act in the U.S.

• (1635)

Third, encourage Canadian manufacturers to stop all business with suppliers and subcontractors that sell materials produced through forced Uighur labour. I would encourage all Canadian citizens not to buy products from brands that continue to rely on goods made by Uighur prisoners. Those lists are easy to find on the Internet.

As I said in my opening, I come here as a Uighur and as the daughter of Ilham Tohti. I believe it is not just my duty but the duty of all of us to protect the fundamental rights of those who are being persecuted.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ilham. Thank you for your courage and for sharing your personal story of the persecution of your father, your family and the Uighurs.

Now we'll ask Gani, our Kazakh interpreter, for a one-minute synopsis, which I know is short, of what Ms. Ilham had to say.

We will move to Ms. Saulybay for her statement.

Gani, can you please let her know about the time? If she goes for two minutes at a time, and you take a minute or two to do the consecutive interpretation, then she can probably break her statement into three blocks.

Ms. Sayragul Saulybay (East Turkestan Minority Activist, Recipient of the 2020 International Women of Courage Award, As an Individual): *[Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:]*

Dear guests who are participating at the current conference, ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy to be at this conference with everyone.

My name is Sayragul Saulybay. I am an ethnic Kazakh. I would like to say thank you so much to the Canadian government which is organizing this conference. I am very grateful to everyone who helped to organize this conference as well.

Again, my name is Sayragul Saulybay. I am an ethnic Kazakh, and I am a live witness for the 21st century's fascist concentration camp, mainly organized by the Chinese Communist Party.

I was born in the native land of my people, which was originally called East Turkestan. After the Chinese Communist Party's acquisition, they changed the name to so-called Xinjiang. I was working there as a doctor, teacher and director of a school.

After the Chinese Communist Party started destroying our people's daily lives, my family and I decided to move to Kazakhstan. When I tried to move with my family to Kazakhstan, they forcibly took my passport and they didn't let me move to Kazakhstan with my family.

After my family moved to Kazakhstan, I was in contact with my family via WeChat, a social media application, and after that the Chinese Communist Party forcibly stopped me from contacting my family via WeChat.

The fascist Chinese Communist Party started their genocide policy to destroy, to kill all the East Turkestan people at the end of 2016. Officially they started this policy at this time. With a lot of false claims, they arrested innocent people and imprisoned them in concentration camps and prisons.

• (1640)

Even though I was not guilty, just because I'm Kazakh and because my family live in Kazakhstan, I became a victim of the cruel policy, and in January 2017, as I said, because my family was living in Kazakhstan, they came after me every midnight to my home. They took me from my home. They were investigating me, scaring me, beating me and pressuring me.

In November 2017 I was forcibly sent to one of the concentration camps that were organized by the Chinese Communist Party, where Kazakh people and Kurdish people were forced to live in prison, and I was teaching them the Chinese language. Because I was a teacher at the concentration camp, I was also forced to sign a secret contract. According to it, if I leaked any information of what I saw inside the concentration camp, I would be sentenced to death.

In the fascist concentration camp where I was imprisoned, there were about 2,500 people just in one concentration camp, and all of them were innocent people who were sent to the concentration camp with fake claims. The age range of the imprisoned people was between 13 and 80 years old. They cut hair off all of the imprisoned men. The imprisoned people were handcuffed hands and feet, all of them. Every corner of the prison cell had CCTV cameras, and the middle of the prison cell had one CCTV camera. All the corridors had cameras as well, and they controlled our every move 24 hours a day.

The prisoners of the concentration camp were forcibly taught and learned Chinese traditions, Chinese culture and songs. Also they were taught the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the policies of the Chinese Communist Party, the notions of the Communist Party and prisoners were praising the Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping.

• (1645)

These Chinese concentration camps were oppressing people. They were destroying the souls of imprisoned people, and they were torturing all prisoners. Also in these concentration camp prisoners were forcibly sterilized, and they were forcibly given special medication. After that, women lost their ability to menstruate and men lost their ability to have a future family. This kind of torture would unfold. All women, young women as well, were raped daily by the workers in the concentration camp.

Also at that concentration camp they had a special so-called black room or black house where there were no cameras. People who went there were badly tortured and there were different kinds of torture in that black room. When I was teaching, sometimes guardians or security came to my class and started speaking to prisoners and they took them away to that black house, the black room. After that, when I was teaching, we would all hear their screaming, their voices. They were begging and asking for help—

• (1650)

The Chair: Gani, let Ms. Sauytbay know she has one more minute to conclude her statement, and then she will have an opportunity to share more during questions.

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

Currently what the Chinese Communist Party is doing in East Turkestan in the 21st century is the same kind of genocide the fascist Germans did 70 years ago against the Jewish people. Also, in the 21st century, the main goal of this genocide by the Chinese Communist Party is to destroy ethnics, to destroy people. Now the people of East Turkestan have the same fate as the Jewish people had before.

I am asking the Canadian government to help the people of East Turkestan and to do everything possible to stop this crime.

The Chair: Gani, I know we've said a lot about technology here today. It is sometimes challenging, but in these extraordinary COVID-19 times, we're blessed to have this technology and to be able to have a Kazakh interpreter in Washington, D.C.—Gani, thank you very much—and to have Ms. Sauytbay able to share her story with us remotely today.

We are going to go to questions now, and we are going to start with the vice-chair and the impetus for our being here today, Mr. Sweet, for seven minutes.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Chair, and thank you again for your kind words. I'll just return to the last witness who just gave her opening remarks.

Ms. Sauytbay, I commend you for fleeing to Kazakhstan and then fleeing to Sweden. You are an extraordinary person, and you deserve the award and recognition that you got for being a courageous person of 2020.

• (1655)

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you so much.

Mr. David Sweet: I will pay you the respect that you deserve and call your homeland East Turkestan. You must have witnessed, because of the time and the duration you were there before you fled, this development of what one of our witnesses called a “police state”, where the surveillance continued to ramp up many times over.

Is it a fair statement that it's not only the incarcerations, but it's entirely a police and surveillance state?

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

Yes, I confirm that East Turkestan became one big prison. Everything everywhere that's said or any action 24 hours a day is recorded, and they check everything and everyone in East Turkestan.

Mr. David Sweet: Ms. Sauytbay, lastly, Adrian Zenz testified today that in his opinion this was the Holocaust 2.0 and that the only difference is that the point was to break and crush the Uighur people rather than have them exterminated. Would you agree with that observation as well?

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

In East Turkestan there are the native people of this land: Uighurs, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tartars, Kyrgyz. All of these people are currently under this Holocaust policy and it's made directly by Beijing to destroy and eradicate all these native people of East Turkestan.

Mr. David Sweet: I'm going to share the rest of my time with my colleague, Mr. Chair, but I wanted to say just one statement to Mr. MacLeod. The statement is that I thank you very much for all of your advocacy in regard to Huseyin Celil. I regret that years have passed and we're not any further along, but we will continue to do the best that we can to seek his ultimate release.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, just to let you know, Mr. Sweet has used just about three and a half minutes. We have stopped time when the Kazakh interpreter speaks. You have three and a half minutes left.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll go to Mr. MacLeod.

Please do give our best to the Celil family. I'm sorry, it looks like we may not be able to hear the testimony directly from them.

I want to ask you about your engagement with the Government of Canada right now. We had some frankly very disturbing testimony at the Canada-China committee back in February, where I had asked our ambassador about the Celil case. He initially seemed unaware of it, and then he said:

I'm looking into that case. I call him Huseyin. Basically, because Huseyin is not a Canadian citizenship holder, we aren't able to get access to him on a consular service side. We've tried, because he's someone I would like to see. I know it has been a long-standing file, but—

That's a quote from our current Ambassador Dominic Barton, in Beijing. I replied to correct him to say that Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen.

It just floored me at the time. In a way it still does, that in testimony specifically where the ambassador spoke regularly about a number of important cases of Canadians detained in China, not only would he not mention the Celil case proactively but that there was that misstatement about Celil's citizenship.

I know it's important for you to work with the government on this, Mr. MacLeod, so I'd like to ask this: Have you been able to have any follow-up engagement with Ambassador Barton? Has he recognized the reality of Mr. Celil's citizenship, and is he taking it up with the same seriousness that he is taking up the cases of other Canadians detained in China?

• (1700)

Mr. Chris MacLeod: Thanks for the question. It might be an opportunity to have Kamila speak for a couple of minutes.

Following that—which I agree that it was disappointing that the ambassador had not been properly briefed—is that at the early stages in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and onwards, you'll recall that there was very deep engagement. Prime Minister Harper was pushing hard, with Minister MacKay, Minister Kenney, Mr. Sweet and many others, so it was disappointing to hear that the ambassador hadn't been fully briefed.

However, I know, and Kamila I think would speak to this if we can get her on today—to give at least a couple of minutes, I think it would be warranted—that the ambassador did call her and spoke to her directly and personally about that slip and clarified the record. He acknowledged, of course, that Huseyin is a Canadian citizen, which is why I wanted to take at least two minutes when I commenced my remarks to the committee to remind everyone that

Huseyin has only flown on a Canadian passport. Most troubling is that some of the issues, and the reason he was detained, may well have arisen again because of his activities in Canada, speaking about religious freedom and religious freedom of expression.

Thank you for raising that right now. It's one of the reasons we've also always called for a special envoy. An ambassador has multi-faceted roles in any embassy, particularly in China where the relationship is so multilateral and so multi-faceted. A special envoy who would report directly to the Prime Minister, or perhaps to the committee, to say what we need to do to obtain the release and return of a Canadian citizen languishing in prison in China—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just before my time wraps up, can I ask a quick follow-up question?

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Genuis.

Your time is wrapping up very shortly.

Kamila is available now. We can have her for 30 seconds to a minute if you'd like her to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If she is available, I would suggest she be able to give her full testimony, not just a piece at the tail end of my time.

Can we pause the questions and have her give her testimony?

The Chair: Do you mean her statement?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: It was going to be shared with Mr. MacLeod and Mr. MacLeod took up those six minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, but I would look to the committee to see if there is consensus on that and I would suggest we hear her testimony.

The Chair: I see consensus from committee members, so we want to hear from Kamila. Hopefully the sound and everything works.

Clerk, we're going to try right now, so hopefully Kamila comes on.

We can't hear Kamila as of yet. My apologies, we still don't—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Maybe I'll take the last 30 seconds, but if at some point we get it working, let's revert back to hearing from...

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. MacLeod, certainly it would be important to me that the Canadian government and our ambassador are as engaged and seized with the cases of dual nationals detained in China—people like Mr. Celil, Fan Wei and other dual nationals—as they are with other cases, such as the Kovrig, Spavor and Schellenberg cases, that don't involve dual nationals. This is important because although China regards these kinds of cases differently, Canada of course should not regard these cases as being in any way different. Could you speak to that in the time left?

• (1705)

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Mr. Chris MacLeod: I could not agree with you more. Any Canadian citizen detained needs to be a Canadian we look after.

To be clear, Huseyin Celil, I would argue, is not a dual national. He is a Canadian citizen and Canadian citizen alone. As part of the Chinese constitution citizenship act, when you obtain citizenship of another country, which he did to be Canadian, you renounce your Chinese citizenship.

However, your point is well made, and I could not agree with you more. Any Canadian—

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here and for their testimony. What they have said is not easy for us parliamentarians to hear, but it does not compare with what it must be like to experience it. Now, we have to make sure that your presence and your testimony have not been in vain and that the Canadian government takes concrete action.

Ms. Sauytbay, you told us that the people in the camp where you worked were between the ages of 15 and 80. Do you know what happens to Uyghur children whose parents are imprisoned in those camps?

[*English*]

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

I would like to answer your question. There were 13-year-old children detained at these concentration camps. They didn't divide them based on whether they were kids or adults. The kids had the same level of torture as the adults. For example, a 13-year-old child was detained in a concentration camp because of the false claim that he contacted Kazakhstan and had some connection in Kazakhstan. That was the reason he was sent to the concentration camp, and he absolutely had the same level of torture as adults in the concentration camps.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

I have another question, Ms. Sauytbay. I would like to know how Uyghur families who are not imprisoned in these camps live. Are they oppressed, are they threatened? What is life like for the Uyghurs who are not imprisoned in camps?

[*English*]

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

For the people who are imprisoned in concentration camps, as she said before, in all the prison cells, everywhere, there were constant cameras, CCTV cameras.

For the families who lived outside and hadn't yet gone to the concentration camps, the Chinese government divided all families into three different categories. The first is the dangerous family category. The second one is medium-dangerous, middle-dangerous. The third one is not dangerous, safe. The safe-category families were ethnic Chinese, Han.

The first two categories, dangerous and middle-dangerous or medium-dangerous, were ethnic Kazakh, Uighurs, Tartars and Uzbeks, the native people of East Turkestan. All people, families and parts of families who lived outside the concentration camps will eventually go. They will be sent to concentration camps as well. It's just a matter of the time, the question of time.

The Chinese government's documents show that all of them, 100% of dangerous and medium-dangerous families, will be sent eventually to concentration camps. They didn't send them all because they don't have enough places to place them, but it's just a matter of time. The mayor of East Turkestan, Chen Quanguo, makes it scary by pushing people who live outside the concentration camps.

If you would like to go from one village to another just to visit your relatives, you have to go through seven or eight different departments, and you have to get their permission just to leave your house or to leave your village. Also, all your phones, texts and everything are 100% controlled by the government.

In general, all families, all people, 100%, live in censorship. It's one big prison.

• (1710)

The Chair: You have one final question, and then we have Kamila online.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Ms. Ilham, thank you for your testimony.

In your opinion, could the introduction of Chinese technologies in North America and Europe compromise the ability of activists like you to act by exposing them to reprisals from China?

[*English*]

Ms. Jewher Ilham: I'm sorry; I can't hear the English translation.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Clerk.

• (1715)

The Clerk: Excuse me, Ms. Ilham. On the bottom of your screen, where you see a globe, click on the interpretation icon and select "English".

Ms. Jewher Ilham: It is selected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Can you hear me? Do you have the interpretation while I am talking to you?

[*English*]

Ms. Jewher Ilham: Oh, now I can hear you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Great. I am delighted.

I will be brief. In your opinion, could the introduction of Chinese technologies in North America and Europe compromise the ability of activists like you to act by exposing them to reprisals from China?

[English]

Ms. Jewher Ilham: I definitely think the technology surveillance in China has intervened...most of the people in the world. What do I mean by that?

My laptop, my cellphone, have been constantly monitored, I believe, by the Chinese government. I was invited to a Uighur wedding a few years ago. Because our conversation was monitored, the Chinese police knew that I was going to attend this wedding through our conversation on our cellphones. The newlywed couple were threatened that they should not invite people like me to their wedding.

Also, my and my family's conversations have long been monitored, including through my laptop. The camera would turn on multiple times. The mouse would move by itself frequently. Also, whenever I check the IP address of who has visited my email, I can see that it is from a Chinese IP. I believe this is happening not only to me; it's happening to many other people who are living in the United States and Canada.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much, Ms. Ilham.

[English]

The Chair: We had Kamila, but I think we've lost her right now. Hopefully we will get her again soon.

I did have a mishap as we were going through this round, and I apologize.

We will go to Mr. Zuberi, now, for seven minutes—oh, one second, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: No problem. That's fine.

The Chair: Kamila, can you hear us? Can you please unmute?

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai (Uighur Rights Activist, As an Individual): Hello.

The Chair: Good. Kamila, we will hear your statement now, please.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: Thank you.

First of all, I want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the Uighur people's rights, and especially my husband's case. It has been 14 years. As Chris said, it's been a long 14 years. Maybe lots of people, members of Parliament, are aware of that case, and—

The Chair: I have to interject really quickly, Kamila. I apologize. Can you hear me?

For interpretation, it's very difficult right now. We're asking for unanimous consent to do it in English. Would that be okay?

I see unanimous consent.

Kamila, please continue. Thank you.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: I was saying to you that we had to extend our visit in 2006 in Uzbekistan, and that same year, in July,

he was deported to China. Chinese courts ordered him to be deported to China, and now, since 2006, I've had no communication, no mail and no calls from him. You know, it's been 14 years.

I have been keeping in touch with his family two or three times a year since it began in 2014. Since 2016 I have lost communication with his family in East Turkestan. His family lives in the city of Kashgar. They used to come every six months to visit him in Urumqi.

He doesn't have consular access, and he's never been approved for consular access, which we keep asking for every year from the Canadian ambassador. You know, we have to check his health, how he's doing, if he's alive, how he is doing in the prison in China. We didn't get any answers. We were getting little by little, you know, every six months, a little information about his family, from his family. Right now, how many years is it now? It's four or five years, and I don't have any communication, no information. I cannot call their phones or WeChat, WhatsApp, as those kinds of apps are blocked. I don't have any information from his family.

It seems when we can't change his case...I don't have anything to say. It's very frustrating. You know, it's been 14 years I've been bearing a big strain and then the biggest frustration.

I have four boys. They have grown up. They became teenagers. They're all in high school. They are preparing for university. It's been very difficult. I cannot describe in one or two words my last 14 years and what I went through in these 14 years.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Kamila. Thank you for sharing your story of hardship and what you've gone through over the last 14 years. Thank you.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: Yes.

The Chair: Now we are going to move to our next member to ask questions. Go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I want to thank all the panellists for their strength and testimony here today. It's very touching to hear you and to see you and to see the emotion come through on the camera. Thank you for this.

I wanted to highlight a point that was made by Huseyin Celil's lawyer, Mr. MacLeod. I think it got slightly lost, but we hear media reports that the Chinese government frequently says that Huseyin Celil is only a Chinese national, whereas according to the nationality law of the People's Republic of China, articles 3 and 9 together say... First, article 3 says, "...China does not recognize dual nationality." Article 9 says that when somebody has adopted another nationality or been naturalized outside of China, then they automatically lose their Chinese nationality.

Just for the record, I want us to establish that Huseyin Celil is in fact only Canadian, not a Chinese national right now, according to China's own law. I want to highlight this point because we often hear our Canadian officials saying that Huseyin Celil is, according to the Chinese, a Chinese national, whereas in fact by China's own laws he's a Canadian national.

I want to ask this to both Kamila and Mr. MacLeod: Is there anything that you have seen different, in terms of the circumstances globally or internationally with respect to China and the Uighur people, or locally within Canada since 2015 in terms of advocacy around Huseyin Celil's case? What can we do to strengthen advocacy for him, aside from what you mentioned with respect to a special envoy?

Mr. Chris MacLeod: I'll start, and then I'll turn it over to Kamila.

From 2015 onwards, we have the harsh hand of China against the Uighur minority, but we've also had more of a vacuum on the Canadian political front. The current government, in my submission, has not done all that it can, or enough. Much more needs to be done. A special envoy is number one, and number two, as much as possible, is bipartisanship across the House.

My point would be for the special envoy to do what our American friends to the south have done so often in the past: Utilize former heads of state in Canada. We have Prime Minister Chrétien, Prime Minister Harper, Prime Minister Mulroney and Prime Minister Martin, to name four who would be great special envoys. Former members of Parliament, whether Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, may have had a prominent place and role in international human rights. Let's lean into our Canadian strengths and get a special envoy. Get one now. It's been 14 years.

I'll turn it over to Kamila, but to your point, he is a Canadian citizen. He flew on a Canadian passport, for crying out loud, with an Uzbek visa, so you nailed it. Chinese law itself says he's a Canadian and Canadian alone.

• (1725)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Have you thought of advocating the special envoy theme with respect to the two Michaels?

I personally don't know if there have been special envoys for specific individuals in the past from Canada for other similar cases. I'm wondering if you are advocating along that line. If there has been a precedent, then it would make sense.

Mr. Chris MacLeod: There has been. Prime Minister Harper appointed Jason Kenney, who was a sitting member of Parliament at the time, with the role to assist in and secure the release and return of Michael Kapoustin, who had been detained in Bulgaria for at least 14 years at the time. Ultimately, Michael Kapoustin's lawyer Dean Peroff, and Jason Kenney, effectively acting as a special envoy, obtained the release and return of Michael Kapoustin. There's one example, but there have been others.

In the case of Maher Arar, I believe that Senator De Bané was appointed as some level of special envoy, to some extent. I don't remember all the details around the file and Senator De Bané's appointment.

It certainly has occurred, and the appointment would be at the ambassador level. Could it be inclusive of the two Michaels and other Canadians? It would make sense that it might be. I believe that would warrant some thought.

I think particularly with Huseyin's case, since he has been detained for so long and has languished for so long, and with the

overlay of the persecution of the Uighur community in northwestern China, we now have a double dose in requirement.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

I'll split my time with my colleague Anita.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you so much.

My question is for Ms. Sauytbay. You said something, when you were describing the horrific conditions in the camps, about sexual violence against the women in the camps, in addition to the sterilization. I wonder, if it's not too difficult, if you could elaborate a little bit about what those conditions are.

Of course, there are very many people who don't know what's happened to their family members. What do you think is the fate of the people who are still in those camps?

Ms. Sayragul Sauytbay: [*Witness spoke in Kazakh, interpreted as follows:*]

First of all, I'm very grateful for your question. I'll give you a little more detail about the sexual violence.

In the concentration camps, the Chinese Communist Party guards rape the women and girls they want. It's daily. They just come and pick up any woman they like and will bring her back the next day.

In one of the examples I remember, I was giving a lesson at a class on the Chinese language when they brought back a young lady. When she entered the class, she couldn't even sit on the chair. She just fell down on the floor. They started calling everyone by number. Every girl has a special number. They don't call them by their names; they call them by their numbers. When they called that girl by her number, she said, "I'm not a girl anymore, because they raped me." I remember this very horrible situation.

• (1730)

I would like to give you another example. It's a very horrific example. One day the guards of the concentration camps brought about 200 people to the hall, and they were testing us. They made experiments. Every time they made experiments they checked to see if we changed our minds, if we become normal or not.

In this example, they brought 200 prisoners to the hall, and they picked out one young girl, about 20 years old, and they forced her to accept the guilt for something that she never had done. She was crying and she was saying that she was guilty even though she was not guilty. She accepted it in front of the 200 prisoners. Then the Chinese guards started raping her, one by one, in front of all these 200 prisoners. They went down the line and raped her one by one in front of all the people.

If some of these 200 prisoners showed pain on their faces or in their eyes, or hesitation or any negative emotion, they will say that this prisoner didn't change, didn't become normal, and they will pick these prisoners from the crowd and later they will start torturing them because they didn't change.

After we saw that, we had to accept it and we had to praise the party. This is one of the examples that I was a witness to.

• (1735)

The Chair: Thank you again for your courage and that very difficult testimony.

This leads us to our last questioner, Ms. McPherson. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's very difficult to go after that testimony.

First of all, I want to thank all of you. I can't imagine what you have to go through, to not know where your father is, or where your husband is. Excuse me....

I'm incredibly moved by your bravery to be here and your bravery to share these stories. I'm sorry that you have to relive this pain by sharing this with us.

There are a few things I wanted to ask. One is for Kamila. I know that you are raising your family alone and that you have not been able to see your husband for 14 years, and you don't know where he is or how he is.

I know that Christopher MacLeod was able to talk a little bit about what Canada could do now and what we could do to help bring Mr. Celil home. I wonder if you wouldn't mind taking some time as well. I know we didn't get a moment to hear from you on what you would like to see Canada do now to help with your husband's case. I would really welcome hearing from you, if that's possible.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: Yes. Thank you.

First of all, I'm raising four kids, four boys. They became teenagers. I was pregnant when they arrested my husband. I was three months pregnant, a mother. Can you imagine for a moment?

It's been 14 years, and now my son is going to be 14 in August. I can't see....

It's been so many long years. Months, weeks and years passed. Even if you had a communication, a little bit of information, like emails or calls through his family, that kind of information.... A little piece of information would be a relief to us, a little bit of keeping in touch with their father. He's still alive, but he's in prison. They are trying to bring him back where he belongs.

In this 21st century, with so much technology, we have nothing. We have no calls, no information, no mail, no letters, nothing.

But I'm very thankful for the Canadian government. I'm lucky I'm living in Canada. I'm growing my four boys [*Inaudible—Editor*] four boys in Canada. I'm giving all my best to give them a good education, the best education in Canada, but I always tell them they have to be very proud of their dad. He has spent 14 years away. I don't want to say how long he's going to be there. I don't even want to think about one year or two years in this pandemic world with what's going on in China right now, because in Canada how we are living right now, in the pandemic....

To the Canadian government, first of all, I want to say thank you. They raised every opportunity. The Conservative board mandated all its best, but China is a different country. China was rejecting my husband's Canadian citizenship, and then not giving consular ac-

cess. They tried, but it was not enough. At that time it was not enough. When they helped the first year, they had to act quickly, immediately, but they were late to act.

Now it's been 14 years. My husband is in prison. I don't know what kind of conditions he may be in. I cannot even.... We don't know if he's alive or not, since 2015. Maybe they have been brainwashing him with Communist laws, making him study Communist laws and join the Communist Party, that kind of thing. It might happen in China.

My last word is to the Conservatives, Liberals and NDP. They all need to be together in that case. I don't want them to push that case away from the table. There's the two Michaels case, I know, and I want to raise the case every time, to bring that to the table in the House of Commons. I want to raise that case. Members of Parliament, what's going on with that [*Inaudible—Editor*] case? What's going on? What are we going to do? They have to see it on the table and make the decision to send...I agree with Chris MacLeod to send a special envoy to China.

• (1740)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much. I'm sure your four sons, as you know, are very, very lucky to have a mother like you, who is working so hard for them and for their father.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: It's so hard.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Sorry; what was that?

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: It's hard. It is very difficult. It is hard, you know. It is hard to get education. For education and after-school programs, I was running everywhere. It's a very big challenge.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have two children of my own, so I can imagine what four boys must be like, just feeding them alone.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: Especially in this pandemic. Right now we are.... Yes, that's been tough.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I appreciate what you say about working together and having all parties in the House work together. I want to commit that certainly that's something I feel I will bring forward.

For all of the panellists, one last question I can bring forward is in terms of our supporting the Uighur community: Who have been the most effective allies in the fight to end these human rights abuses? Whose voices are best to be amplified right now? What else can we do for you at this time?

I'll open that up to all of you, to the rest of this panel, just to wrap up.

Ms. Kamila Talendibaevai: There are a lot of Uighur people working on human rights right now for the concentration camps. There are multiple people working on human rights.

My suggestion is that the Canadian people need to be aware of this case, be aware that he's a Canadian citizen. All Canadian people need to be aware and put pressure on the Canadian government, and then work together.

The parties also need to work together on this case. They should not push from only one party. The Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP have to work together, and then connect with Amnesty International. With human rights, we are all together.

We are sending letters. As much as we can, we are sending letters from high schools. We did a lot of presentations in high schools and in the communities. At least we are sending them. We don't get anything back from the Chinese authorities, but the Canadian government sends us word that they are still working on this case, that they didn't forget about it. What's most important is that the Canadian people need to be aware.

The Chair: Thank you.

That concludes our fourth panel of witnesses.

On behalf of all the committee members, all the staff here—the interpreters and the technicians—and those watching online, I want to thank the witnesses for their compelling testimony, which has gone on record. I think we've all been truly moved by your testimony. Thank you for your courage, and thank you for sharing your very personal stories with us here today.

Tomorrow we will have our second day of panels. They will start at 11 a.m. and go throughout the day, for those who are viewing online and want to see those proceedings.

At this time we are going to move in camera. I believe I have consensus from all members to do so.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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