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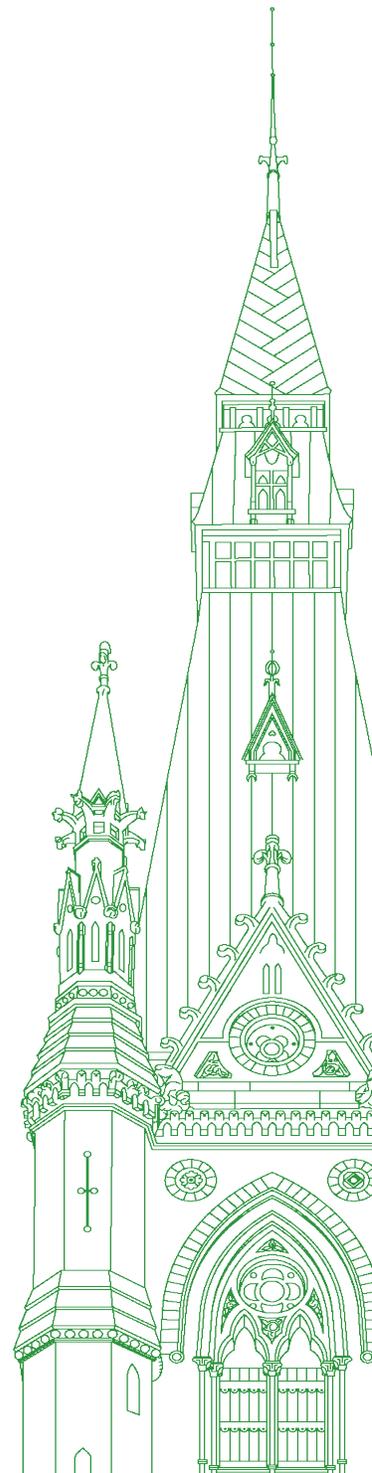
Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi

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• (1830)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone, to meeting number 10 of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

Today we'll be looking further at the situation of human rights in Ukraine.

Let me provide a quick reminder to all those present in the room to please follow the recommendations from the public health authorities, as well as the directives of the Board of Internal Economy, to remain healthy and safe.

I'd like to welcome our first witness today. Natasha Power Cayer is the ambassador and permanent delegate at UNESCO.

Ambassador Cayer, thank you for joining us. I know that for you it's the middle of the night. You were very gracious to accommodate us. We very much look forward to your remarks.

You have five minutes to provide your remarks, after which the members have an opportunity to ask you questions.

The floor is yours, Madam Ambassador.

[Translation]

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer (Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Canada, UNESCO): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, I am honoured to be here today as permanent delegate of Canada to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, to participate in this important study.

I would like to begin by saying a few words on Canada's work at UNESCO, in general.

Our main role is to exert influence so that Canada's political priorities would be reflected in UNESCO's policies, including those related to human rights and to normative activities. That is how we have defended Ukraine consistently over the past few years.

After Russia attempted to annex Crimea and illegally occupied it in 2014, Canada advocated that UNESCO monitor cultural heritage, right to education and freedom of expression in Crimea so that Russia would be accountable for its actions. Following February 24 of this year, we applied pressure for the Executive Board to adopt a decision condemning Russia's actions and calling for UNESCO to take action to support Ukraine.

[English]

Let me offer a few specifics with regard to UNESCO's subsequent actions following that decision.

With regard to freedom of expression and of the media, UNESCO rolled out an emergency response mechanism to protect journalists, media and communications infrastructure to bolster civilians' access to life-saving information and to tackle disinformation. The Canada-U.K. global media defence fund, which is based in UNESCO and was established in 2019, has supported the provision of emergency safety and communications equipment to journalists directly, relocated two journalist unions' offices to safe areas and provided conflict reporting safety training to journalists, many of whom were transformed overnight into war correspondents.

In the area of education, UNESCO is working to maintain continuity for Ukrainian students, both inside and outside of Ukraine. With 23 private and public partners, UNESCO is supplying computer equipment, assisting in the integration of online learning content and collaborating with UNHCR to develop digital learning recommendations for refugee-receiving countries. Canada is exploring how we can best further bolster our support for this effort.

In the area of cultural property, three UNESCO conventions are of direct relevance in the current context. The famed 1972 World Heritage Convention stipulates that state parties must not take part in any deliberate measures that would damage the cultural and natural heritage situated on the territory of other state parties. Both Ukraine and Russia are signatories to this treaty, but only Russia is a member of the World Heritage Committee and, in fact, is currently chairing it. Canada has been actively working through our delegation here and directly with our like-minded partners to address this untenable situation. However, the convention offers very limited options in that regard, and it requires a two-thirds majority vote of sitting committee members to change the situation.

Both Ukraine and Russia are also parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which requires parties to support cultural property in their own territory and that of other parties. Its first protocol prohibits the export of cultural property from occupied territories. This is a point relevant to the objects that Russia is alleged to have removed from Ukraine.

UNESCO also recognizes that, in times of armed conflict, measures to protect cultural heritage from trafficking need to be reinforced, and it does so under the UNESCO 1970 convention against illicit trafficking of cultural property. The organization is currently working in concert with other multilateral institutions to make it more difficult to loot and traffic Ukrainian objects. Additional funding is currently being sought to enable a quicker, more effective global response.

We know that we need to protect Ukrainian cultural heritage and that the need is immense. Canada's financial contribution of \$4.8 million to UNESCO's heritage emergency fund, which was made in March 2022, gave a welcome boost to this effort. In doing so, we're enabling UNESCO and its partners, such as Blue Shield International, Interpol, ICOMOS, ICCROM and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to help Ukrainian authorities through actions ranging from digitizing collections, providing protective packing materials, mobilizing experts to provide technical advice and assisting in the relocation of movable cultural property.

Importantly, UNESCO has also commissioned UNITAR to provide satellite monitoring and imagery to document and assess damage to heritage sites, museums and cultural institutions, and has to date verified harm to 123 properties. The organization is also conducting preliminary damage assessment regarding reports of objects being removed from museums in Melitopol and Mariupol by Russian authorities.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

In short, UNESCO's emergency action measures on the ground are modest, but its reputation enables it to mobilize its partners and to take action, in its areas of expertise, as the Ukrainian government's main interlocutor. We hope this will be even more true at the end of the war, when rebuilding needs will be extremely significant.

Thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

We will now turn to the members. Each member will have five minutes. If they go over, 30 seconds before their time is up, I will be putting up this sign.

The first member is Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the UNESCO representative for being here.

I found your testimony really interesting. Is Russia currently a signatory to any of the conventions that UNESCO oversees, in particular around cultural property and heritage?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Yes, indeed. The Russian Federation is a very active member in the cultural field at UNESCO. As I mentioned, there are three main conventions that are pertinent in the context of the conflict itself, and those include the World Heritage Convention because within it states parties commit not to conduct any activity that harms natural or built heritage. There is also

the 1970 convention on the illicit traffic in cultural property, which, again, Russia is a signatory to. Then, very importantly, because it's also linked to the Geneva conventions, is the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Culture Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. That is the most relevant one, I think, in the current context. It has clear stipulations that restrict what signatories can do.

It has two protocols. Russia isn't a signatory to the second protocol, which has some elements that give some more specificity to what those responsibilities are, but nevertheless it is signatory to the convention itself and its first protocol, which covers all the bases, essentially, of controlling what they do.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

You mentioned that in Canada we have given \$4.8 million to the UNESCO heritage cultural fund, if I recall correctly. In addition to that, what can Canada do to help preserve cultural heritage in this conflict that Ukraine is facing with Russia in this war?

• (1840)

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: I have to say what we have done is nothing short of amazing considering the fact that the heritage emergency fund has, generally speaking, received contributions of a much smaller size. Our contribution has expanded the possibilities for them exponentially compared to what they had in hand at the start of the conflict, so we have done a lot in having provided that \$4.8 million.

Canada as a country, and one with significant expertise in preservation, restoration, the maintenance of cultural collections, digitization and so on, is also providing expertise through these international networks to which many of our citizens who have that expertise belong. These citizens are then being connected with Ukraine via the organization that is bringing those experts together so that those connections can then produce results on the ground and help Ukrainians more quickly protect those elements physically. The elements that need physical protection are the ones that can't be moved. The experts are also dealing with the movable collections and either transferring them somewhere else or preparing the timelines for that potential transfer if it can't be done at the moment, since there are certain areas, of course, in which there is nowhere to go given the current situation.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thanks.

There has been a lot of conversation around genocide in Ukraine by Russia. Do you see a link between genocidal intent on the part of Russia and the destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage sites?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: The genocide convention is really outside of my mandate, so I would be skating on thin ice to comment on that.

But, generally speaking, when assessments are made in a proceeding to determine whether or not genocide is, in fact, being perpetrated, there is always the question of intent. I think in certain cases perhaps—and this is my personal opinion—if there is clearly targeting of cultural property, that could be used as an element to try to establish that there is intent.

Again, I do not have responsibility for legal conventions in general. I'm a UNESCO ambassador. That is really something that's beyond the scope of my expertise, but the need to protect cultural heritage is clearly based in international humanitarian law, because destroying a society's cultural heritage is something that has been seen as destroying the will of and committing harm to that society.

I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: It helps enlighten it. Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll turn to Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador. Picking up where you left off with regard to the clear targeting of cultural property, is there evidence that Russia is deliberately targeting Ukrainian cultural and heritage sites?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Again, this becomes a question of determining intent. What is clear is that there are many properties now. As I said, as of Monday morning, 123 sites had been documented as having been damaged or destroyed by Russian forces. The question as to why those sites were hit is something that will have to be determined through investigations.

It's really hard for me to.... I mean, I haven't even seen the imagery, so I can't comment on that precisely. In any event, it will require formal investigations in order to make determinations of that nature. In the fog of war, it's going to be difficult. Nevertheless, what is clear is that you have a country that's invaded another one. I think there's enough material currently being documented to prove that there are war crimes happening of different types. We'll see how those are adjudicated.

Again, this is not my area of expertise, but there is now at least a significant effort to document what is going on through people on the ground and, as I mentioned earlier, through the use of satellite imagery and taking constant photographs of what are the principal sites.

I have to say that the \$4.8 million we gave to the heritage emergency fund has enabled a significant increase in the amount of satellite coverage that is being put over Ukraine. It has enabled six additional cities to be given coverage. That is very significant. They're very significant cultural centres. Again, it's not a negligible contribution that Canada is making in this regard. It is of the level that one would expect given our overall commitments to Ukraine and to helping them through this very, very difficult time.

• (1845)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you for that.

In fact, according to the numbers that I see, 127 sites, as of yesterday, have now been damaged.

Would you be able to speak about UN Security Council Resolution 2347 in regard to the protection of cultural heritage as a security imperative?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to do that, because I haven't been dealing with the UN Security Council resolutions on this. Really, we deal with the programs that develop policies to help states protect their own heritage. That's what these cultural conventions are really focused on.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you for that. The resolution, just for the record, provides that the deliberate destruction of cultural property constitutes a war crime.

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Yes. That exists in other—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Certainly it does. It's just that you didn't touch on that specific resolution that had been unanimously adopted by the Security Council in 2017 and that I think is clearly applicable.

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: I don't disagree with you, but at UNESCO we don't, generally speaking, deal with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I understand that. That's fine.

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: We just have to make sure that people don't contravene them.

Mr. Michael Cooper: That's fine.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

We now go to Mr. Trudel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, thank you for joining us.

I must say that I really appreciate you speaking French. There is currently a lot of talk about protecting the two official languages of Canada, where French is under threat, and I see that our representative to UNESCO speaks French very well. Hearing you speak French moved me deeply, and I thank you very much for that.

I would like to put a general question to you.

Ukraine is currently at war and, last week, we heard from a representative of the International Criminal Court and discussed war crimes and human rights violations. We also heard from the honorary consul of Ukraine in Montreal.

This is a deadly conflict, and we don't know how many deaths have been caused by the conflict so far. The news is mostly focused on the protection of people and the evacuation of civilians from Mariupol, among other places.

When it comes to wars in places other than Ukraine, how is UNESCO protecting the cultural and religious heritage or any other form of heritage? Generally speaking, what does UNESCO do to protect heritage?

• (1850)

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Thank you for your great question.

I am also happy to hear you speak French.

I will briefly describe how we are doing things. I will also give you an example I experienced and saw with my own eyes.

UNESCO makes lists. The world heritage list, which people are familiar with, is a list of extraordinary sites with universal cultural value. The coordinates of those sites and sites that are on tentative lists—in other words, those that may be added in the near future—are all identified and codified. Their geographic coordinates are known, and UNESCO has them on hand.

The 1954 Hague Convention, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, helps countries determine what sites should be protected in case of a conflict on their territory. Those coordinates are also all recorded at UNESCO. These are things we can produce easily.

I have an example to show you that actions taken by UNESCO have had an immediate impact.

An air campaign was carried out by NATO or by a coalition in Libya. A call was launched to countries, which were part of that campaign, so as to protect sites located in Libya. As the campaign's commander and his political assistant were accessible, Canada asked UNESCO for all the details related to the coordinates. We provided that directly to the command, which received the order to leave those sites alone.

Not all countries at war or in a conflict or all countries where military operations are taking place follow the rules of international law. However, some countries do follow them.

UNESCO can transmit that information if the participants in the war want to respect their obligations, in accordance with international law, to keep their hands off those objects. That is something we can do directly.

Here is another measure that can be taken. We can provide direct assistance by giving technical advice on, for example, the way museums can prepare a collection, mobilize it and transfer it. All museum directors have plans in mind in case of fire or earthquake, but they don't have a plan in case of war. However, a war can make them have to move their collections over long distances, among other things.

So UNESCO can provide technical advice. For instance, we translated into Ukrainian a guide that shows how to quickly prepare to protect and transport various types of collections. Some collections are archives and others are cultural objects, like those we see in traditional museums. That guide helps develop accurate plans and advises on how to do that within a short time frame. That helps avoid losses and ensure that everything is recorded and prepared properly when that kind of action has to be taken.

• (1855)

Protection equipment is also supplied.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ambassador, could I ask you to wrap up your comments?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Other things are also being done now. We are documenting collections that cannot be moved. There are techniques used that UNESCO can provide. UNESCO can help find experts who can travel and will even go to a country at war to ensure that photographs of everything are taken. That way, if an object that cannot be transported is destroyed, we will at least have photographs that can be used for reconstruction purposes. UNESCO can do a lot of things.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you, Ambassador.

[*English*]

The Chair: We now go to Ms. McPherson, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's nice to see you back.

I'd also like to thank our witness today. This has been very interesting.

I'm interested in learning a bit more about those ties to the need to erase a people when we are looking at the perpetration of genocide, and how the erasure of cultural heritage is part of that. I recognize that right now in Ukraine it is extremely chaotic. There is a war going on, an illegal war, an illegal invasion, and people are dying. Of course, that must be our first priority and our first focus, but the work you're doing to ensure that the cultural identity of Ukraine is kept as safe as can be is so vitally important.

I have a couple of questions for you. First of all, we've heard Vladimir Putin speak about how Ukrainians are not even a people, that in fact Ukrainians are Russians. I think obviously that's indicative of his genocidal intentions, but can you talk a little bit about how that position influences the destruction of cultural and heritage sites by the Russian army? Can you also explain the link between genocidal intent and the destruction of cultural and heritage sites, please?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: Again, I'm not a legal expert of the department and I can't really comment on the determination of genocide with regard to this specific case. That's going to have to be adjudicated. People will then go through all of these elements that you've identified to try to piece together if there is a case or not that proves intent.

Clearly there is, in the current situation, absolutely no indication that there is any restraint being put on Russian armed forces in terms of the messaging they're receiving from their leadership. I think if you're messaging that these people are only a people who have Nazi intent against Russia and against russophones, then you're going to be enabling bad behaviour by your own armed forces. You're not going to be feeling as a soldier, I'm sure, that you're going to be sanctioned for doing something when the country that you're in is being vilified by your own leadership. Those who are perpetrating these actions are not being called to account by their senior officers.

That's just an observation, as somebody who is watching this from the outside, of what that will look like in a situation should there ever be, finally, a real investigation and prosecution of the war crimes being perpetrated. It will be for the courts to determine, based on what the investigators are able to put together and the prosecutor is able to argue. From my perspective, of course, as somebody who's worked on the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, and Ukraine and the west, for over two decades now, I have to say the intent, to me, is pretty clear, but that's just Natasha Cayer. It has nothing to do with anything else, and it has no value. It's just a feeling. I'm sure that's a feeling that's widely shared across Canada and across the western world by those who have been watching these atrocities going on.

With regard to cultural property, I think there is clearly a disregard for anything that is Ukrainian cultural property, and there's not seemingly much intent to try to circumscribe what targeting and activities are going on within Ukraine. We've seen some significant sites that have been completely destroyed, including ones that were harbouring people. I think that speaks for itself, but what the determination will be eventually is going to be in the hands of the experts who do the investigation and the prosecutors who will bring it forward.

• (1900)

Ms. Heather McPherson: I think you mentioned some of this when you spoke to my colleague from the Bloc, the idea that the destruction of cultural artifacts is a tool. Whether it is in this case, whether that determination has been made by legal experts in this case, has of course not been determined, but in previous examples of genocide, the destruction of cultural identity has been a piece of that. Is that correct?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: I'm not an expert on genocide, but I think if you look at the Holocaust—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry. Even just when we look at examples of the past, when it has been very clearly proven that genocide has taken place, the destruction of heritage and culture often accompany that. Would that be accurate to say?

Ms. Natasha Power Cayer: I would say...based on my reading as an amateur historian of military history and the Second World War in particular, which was catastrophic on that score.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I think that's all the time that I have.

The Chair: Yes, it is. Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Once again, Madam Ambassador, allow me to thank you for joining us late into the night, your time. We're very grateful. Your comments and your responses were incredibly helpful, so thank you. I know I speak on behalf of all members of the committee.

Members, we will be going into the second session. We're going to have to suspend and then resume.

• (1900)

(Pause)

• (1905)

The Chair: Allow me now to welcome members of our second panel, who again, I should add, are joining us at a very late time in the evening, local time, in Ukraine.

By my calculations, it's around 2:30 in the morning your time. We're very grateful that you made yourselves available and that you accepted our invitation.

We have with us today, Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk, member of Parliament and deputy chair of the Servant of the People faction. We also have Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko, who is the mayor of the city of Chernihiv. The third person we currently have is Ms. Sevgil Musayeva, who is the editor-in-chief of the *Ukrayinska Pravda*.

Allow me to explain that you each have five minutes for your opening statement, and, of course, we're being provided with simultaneous translation. After your opening statements are over, we will open it up to the floor and the members will have an opportunity to ask you questions.

Ms. Kravchuk, if you're ready, the floor is yours.

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk (Member of Parliament, Deputy Chair of the Servant of the People fraction, Parliament of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada)): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am very honoured to be able to speak at this hearing. I was honoured to be a part of a women's delegation that came to Canada just five weeks ago. I met with some of you, whom I recognize.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your help and the help of the Canadian people. It's very important for us. It's very important that Prime Minister Trudeau visited Ukraine a few days ago.

I would also like to thank the chair of the subcommittee, Ali Ehsassi, for coming to Ukraine a few days ago as well, having the opportunity of witnessing the results of atrocities by the Russian army in Ukraine and visiting the Kyiv region and the small villages near Kyiv that were occupied for more than a month.

Also, I would like to thank all of the members of both the Senate and the House of Commons for voting for and supporting the resolution about genocide in Ukraine, because we really do think and feel that it is genocide.

But we haven't won yet, as you know. The war is ongoing. Right now, it has been 75 days of ongoing war and ongoing atrocities in Ukraine, with violations of human rights every day. It has been a full-scale invasion for 75 days, but the war has been ongoing for eight years. It started in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. We have to understand that, if the world had been strong enough to answer to Putin in 2014, if he had been stopped then, we probably would not be facing such atrocities right now.

The Russian army, its political leadership in the Kremlin and Putin himself are responsible for numerous war crimes in Ukraine—thousands of war crimes. They have crossed every red line since this full-scale invasion: shelling and bombing civilians; torturing civilians and executing them; raping women and children; establishing “filtration camps”; deportation; and kidnapping, especially activists, journalists and representatives of local governance and local councils.

I can give you a few facts, and then I will be ready, of course, to answer your questions.

We can't even say what the estimated number of civilians is who have been killed since February 24, but in only the Kyiv region, the police discovered over 1,200 bodies. These people were tortured. They were shot to death. Bodies were found with their hands tied.

There were witnesses of women who were raped in front of children, and children who were raped in front of their mothers. Some schools were turned into torturing camps. We have a witness from Katiuzhanka, the principal of one of the schools, who said that in their basement there was a torture camp, where at least a couple of thousand people were tortured and some of them were killed.

In Mariupol—you have probably heard the name of the city—we can't really say how many people died in Mariupol, but probably at least 20,000. We can't count them because we don't have access to the city right now. There have been mobile crematoriums working there to cover up the bodies and to cover the traces of these war crimes that were committed. There are also mass graves near Mariupol. We can see them from above.

• (1910)

Right now, the defenders of Mariupol are still in the Azovstal steel plant. Over 500 wounded soldiers are still there. The Russians will not let them go, despite all the rules of the Geneva Convention. We are working together with the United Nations, the Red Cross and third party countries to get them out. We really hope for your support, as well as your political leadership in this process to get these people out.

I can send additional information, both in English and French, about the biggest cases of shelling civilians. You've probably heard about the Kramatorsk railway station, where 59 people died and over 100 were wounded. The maternity ward in Mariupol was bombed in March. At least one mother-to-be died, along with her unborn child. There are many other cases. You will read about them in the paper. In every case, someone loses their life. Families are losing their children, or children are losing their parents.

Another thing I would like to—

• (1915)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: Okay. I will leave it until I answer questions.

To summarize, we really need to understand that this evil cannot go unpunished. These war crimes have to be punished and we need to establish an international war tribunal so that all of these soldiers who committed crimes, as well as their political leadership, will be tried in this court and punished.

Thank you.

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

We now turn to Mayor Atroshenko.

You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko (Mayor, City of Chernihiv): [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

Greetings to the esteemed members of Parliament. I would also like to thank you on behalf of all of the residents of Chernihiv.

On my own behalf, I would like to thank the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister and the people of Canada for the powerful support you're lending us. We can really feel it. We're very grateful for this. We're grateful to those Canadians who were one of the first to come to our aid. We're also grateful to the members of the Ukrainian World Congress, which is based in Canada.

With regard to war crimes that Russia committed in Chernihiv, here's what I have to say. From the very first days of the war... You'll know that the active phase of the war started in 2014. Then, in 2022, it started on February 24, and on February 27, the first Iskander missiles hit the building of our city council in the very centre of Chernihiv, next to the central square.

These are very powerful missiles, and they were obviously directed by the Russian officers at the downtown of a city that's 1,300 years old. Clearly, they were aiming at the city council, but I think they were also aiming at the civilian population. The city was surrounded for a month and a half. The city was shelled with all kinds of weapons. The shelling was indiscriminate. It was chaotic. Various calibres of weapons, artillery, tanks and missiles were used. Aviation bombing was deployed. Three hundred and fourteen civilians died, 16 of them children under 16 years of age.

Russians were consciously committing these crimes. They knew they were not shooting at any military units or infrastructure. They were shooting at the infrastructure of the city, the civilian infrastructure, and in particular the water pumping stations, the electricity stations, the auto parks belonging to the city, public transit and parks. Nine thousand, six hundred and fifty-two apartments have been destroyed completely, and 1,500 private houses have been destroyed as well. This shows that the entire city was under fire.

Putin himself called the city the cradle of orthodoxy. It was in the city of Chernihiv that the Kievan Rus started, so it was not just the city they were destroying. It was the entire historical city that contains many cultural sites. This is a city of ancient history.

Luckily, the Russians were unable to enter the administrative territory of the city thanks to the armed forces of Ukraine and thanks to the thousands of residents of the region who took up arms and who repeated the feats of their ancestors, who have never given up and have never surrendered in their history.

• (1920)

There are egregious cases of war crimes that I could cite. There's a pilot by the name of Krasnoyartsev who was killed, but he also testified. He dropped six bombs of TNT, 500 kilograms each. At the epicentre of these explosions, about 10 kilometres from there, there are no military infrastructure sites. During these bombing attacks, 49 civilians died. They were just in their own apartments. They had no weapons in their hands. These were mostly women, children and elderly people. They died without ever trying to resist the Russian army.

There's another egregious case. A mortar shelling was done on a lineup of people who were trying to buy bread. Several people died in that attack. I also know of a case where mortar shelling led to the dismemberment of an IT programmer. He lost his limbs as he was going to work. Many other people, innocent people, have lost their lives.

The Chair: Mr. Atroshenko, could I ask you to conclude your remarks? You will later have the opportunity to answer questions by the members.

Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

Yes.

I would like to conclude my remarks by saying the following. I'd like to support what Yevheniia said before me. These atrocities, these crimes, of the Russian army have been committed consciously. The Russian army is called a terrorist organization by all the residents of the region. Russia is the aggressor. Russia has to be held accountable by the international tribunal, and Putin has to be brought to account personally.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Ms. Musayeva.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Ms. Sevgil Musayeva (Editor-in-Chief, Ukrayinska Pravda): Thank you.

Good evening, all. My name is Sevgil Musayeva. I'm chief editor of Ukrayinska Pravda. I'm not a politician or a human rights defender, but I am faced with human rights violations and the violation of humanitarian international law every day.

I want to thank you for your continuous support of our country during this very hard time.

As a journalist, I recognize that this war is not only a war between democratic values and a totalitarian regime, but also a war between truth and propaganda. I see how during the last eight years Russian propaganda has fuelled this war. I also see how journalists during this war became real targets. What I mean is that more than 20 journalists have already been killed by the Russian army in Ukraine. Of course, not all of them were killed during the coverage of this war, but during the coverage of this war, there have already been 11. This is crazy.

One of them was my good friend, Brent Renaud. He was an American filmmaker. He came to Ukraine to show the stories of Ukrainian refugees. He came to Ukraine together with another of my friends, a Colombian journalist, Juan Arredondo. He was injured, and he's already been through five operations. It's difficult.

As journalists, we became human rights defenders, because during all of this time, we're faced with a lot of human rights violations. What I mean, for example, is that three weeks ago, one of my colleagues asked to tell a story about her mother. Her mother was in Rubezhnoye, a city in the Donetsk region. Together with her two small kids, she was first deported to Leningrad oblast in Russia. For three days, they were travelling on the train. Of course, we helped them. Now they're in Estonia. As a Crimean Tartar, whose family was deported in 1944 by the Soviet army, I can show that it is possible in the 21st century.

During all of these 75 days of war, we covered a lot of stories about filtration camps in occupied territories. A lot of our Ukrainian people went through these filtration camps. Unfortunately, some of them were captured by Russians and are still in these filtration camps.

I will add that more than 100,000 people are still in Mariupol, which is now occupied by Russia. They can travel and they can be evacuated during this story, but what I am shocked by in the last three days are militaries in Azovstal. My colleague Yevheniia has already described this brutal situation.

One of the physicians was travelling together with her kid in an official evacuation by the international Red Cross. Unfortunately, she was separated from her daughter—four months old. Her mother is now in a filtration camp in Manhush. She was a physician in Azovstal. She is in a filtration camp. Her daughter was travelling alone to Poland, because Russians captured her mother. We still don't have an idea where she is. She is maybe in this filtration camp in Manhush.

We ask all humanitarian organizations to help us. This is not like any similar situation. We're faced with such brutal human rights violations every single day.

• (1925)

I have some remarks about the situation.

First of all, help us to locate people. Help us to provide international humanitarian corridors for people from Azovstal, because we know there are lots of civilians still in this place. We know there are lots of injured soldiers. Right now, there are 600 injured soldiers, and today they showed us brutal pictures of that. There are lots of physicians who have helped these people over the last 75 days, but already they don't have medicines, they don't have water and they don't have medical tools to provide assistance.

Second, of course, I'm asking about your support to help Ukraine resume investigations of all of these humanitarian war crimes. Of course, we need separate international humanitarian support for the Ukrainian situation. I know that it will be difficult. I know all of the problems with this.

One time I interviewed a very famous professor, Philippe Sands, who wrote a book about two brave Ukrainians who created the basis of international law, even for genocide. He described that it was difficult during their time, but they did it.

I hope that, in the 21st century, when our world is faced with such brutality and humanitarian law violations, we need a new—

• (1930)

The Chair: Ms. Musayeva, perhaps I could ask that you conclude.

Ms. Sevgil Musayeva: I'm finished.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Our fourth witness has now joined us. We have Mr. Yuriy Bova, who is the mayor of the city of Trostyanets.

The floor is yours, Mr. Bova. You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Yuriy Bova (Mayor, City of Trostyanets): [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

Good day to everyone.

I represent a small Ukrainian city called Trostyanets. We are located 30 kilometres from the Russian Federation, so from the very first day, we were very aware of all of the war activities. The Russian army entered the city with hundreds of armoured cars and thousands of Russian troops, who occupied the city. It was a peaceful city, because there was no Ukrainian military stationed there, so we were occupied.

From the very first days, they started to commit acts of atrocities against the civilian population. On the third day, there was a woman who was walking along the street to go to buy some groceries. She was an elderly lady of 75 years. She was killed by a Russian sniper. This sniper wouldn't let anyone approach the body of this woman for three days. No relatives could collect the body. They wouldn't allow anyone to approach, so she was just laying there in the street. We all felt terrorized.

There were many instances. For example, in another case, a private house was bombed and the person who lived there was torn to pieces.

Another thing is that the Russians prevented people from burying the dead. We found people who had been terrorized and interrogated. We saw the beatings and their hands were tied. There are untold atrocities.

In one case, a woman had to piece together the body of her husband, but she was prevented from burying him. The children had to see the body of their father, who was in the house, and they were not able to bury him. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine living in the house?

There are untold horrible situations, and there are a number of such horrible situations that happened during the occupation of the city.

The Russians placed their tanks in the cemetery and they would not allow for any burial to take place.

We tried to organize so-called “green corridors” to evacuate people from the city. However, under the pretense of these so-called green corridors, the Russians brought more troops and more armaments into the city. They searched people. They stopped people.

We were cut off from the rest of the world, because there were interruptions with communications. We kept seeing huge numbers of Russian military personnel and huge amounts of military equipment. We never knew what was going to happen next and what other kinds of suffering they were going to execute on us.

The Russians occupied us for 31 days. During this 31-day period, they prevented any food supplies from entering and being brought to the city. At the same time, they robbed all the pharmacies and all the stores. They destroyed all of the ambulances, so the city was left without a single working ambulance.

One woman had to walk for miles to get to a local medical clinic. On the way there—I know this for a fact, because she worked at the city council—she was killed by fire from a Russian military vehicle.

• (1935)

We had a number of older people who were, again, prevented from leaving the city. The Russians would not allow anyone to leave the city.

We had interruptions in electricity and water supply. People had to go without food supplies and without functioning water. In the early days, because it was still February, there was snow. People were melting snow and drinking water from melted snow.

We found some notes afterwards. We don't know who that Russian person was. He said, “On March 3 we arrived at the city of Trostyanets, but we are actually behaving like fascists. We have robbed all the stores. We have broken all the windows and we've done much damage.” Then he continues, this Russian soldier, at the same time, “I went through a store and found a nice ladies' bag for my wife and some other accessories. I didn't take anything else, because I didn't like anything else that I saw there.”

So these people, these Russians, realize what they are doing. It's not like they don't understand what they are doing. Nevertheless, they continue these activities. Our security services—

The Chair: Mr. Bova, could I ask you to conclude?

Mr. Yuriy Bova: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

We found a notebook from one of the soldiers that describes the interrogations and atrocities that more than 20 people who were in that torture chamber suffered through. On March 23 our local hospital was bombed. Tanks fired 32 shots from a distance of about 200 metres.

The Chair: Mr. Bova, can I ask you to conclude your remarks? The members have questions that they want to ask all the panellists. You have 10 seconds to conclude, please.

Mr. Yuriy Bova: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

Those are examples of the atrocities. The entire world should make sure that Putin is brought to account.

We believe in Ukraine and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and we believe in our victory. Ukraine will be victorious.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bova.

Now we will go to the members for questions.

I will say that, for each segment, each member has only five minutes. Once those are up, I will have to indicate that and cut you off.

The first member for this round is Ms. Vandenbeld.

You have the floor.

• (1940)

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

Before I begin, I think I speak for all of us and all parliamentarians in saying that we absolutely stand solidly with you. We applaud your courage. We stand beside you in our outrage at the crimes that you are testifying about today.

It is good to see you again, Ms. Kravchuk. I wish and I hope that next time it will be under much better circumstances.

Ms. Musayeva, the fact that as a journalist you have of necessity become a human rights defender—I think we all applaud everything that you're doing.

I want to direct my questions today to Mayor Atroshenko and Mayor Bova, who are testifying today from their cities with such courage, telling us what has actually happened. I've heard all of you talking about impunity, about crimes not going unpunished, and that there has to be accountability. Often when we are dealing with these things it's after the fact, when much of the evidence has been destroyed. It's very hard to go back in time and collect the kind of evidence that can hold up in court, but this is happening now. This is happening in real time.

Can you tell us what Canada can do? We've sent members of our national police force, the RCMP, to the International Criminal Court to do investigations. Is there more that we can do to support those on the ground, who are experiencing and seeing this and witnessing it first-hand, to understand what they need to do in order to be able to document this, maybe helping the Ukrainian prosecutor's office or civil society members?

I will start with you, Mr. Atroshenko. Go ahead.

Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

I think that for Canada and all our major partners who are the most staunch in their support—the U.K., Poland, the U.S., the Baltic states—for us what's most important is that we urge all these NATO member states, all these EU member states, to maintain economic sanctions. We think the economic sanctions on the one hand and our military resistance within Ukraine are the most important things that can be done right now.

That's why we do understand that if you join in the sanctions, then your countries of course are suffering certain losses—some more, some less. However, today we clearly understand that Putin

is related to Hitler in his ideology, and propagating fascism cannot be justified. I think the consistent pressure of the sanctions and speaking to European countries—Hungary, for example—urging them to join in the sanctions.... Hungary is a NATO member, but it should be urged to be more active, and Germany and France, by the way.... These are the biggest things.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

We need weapons, the high-tech weapons. This is what will help us triumph over Putin.

Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

I know there's not much time left, so I'd like to have Mr. Bova weigh in as well.

Go ahead, Mr. Bova.

• (1945)

Mr. Yuriy Bova: [*Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

You know, you're entirely right. We do need to collect this evidence as soon as possible. We need to prepare the documents of those witnesses, and it has to be done by people who have the relevant experience. You know, our generation did not know war, so all these investigators who are investigating need your assistance, so please come to our cities. We haven't been able to rebuild everything. You can see the ruins with your own eyes.

We preserved the very tank that destroyed our hospital. Our Ukrainian armed forces damaged it, and inside the tank are the documents of all the tank crew who committed these crimes. There are people who were tortured, and maybe there are psychologists who can work with them. There are people who are prepared to work with others to tell the atrocities they lived through, but it's very hard to talk about these things, about the atrocities that were committed against their persons and against their bodies. This has to be recorded and then shown to the world.

You have to show how Russia behaved. They behaved like Nazi Germany, and international journalists should come and show the truth about Russia. The entire world did not believe at first that Russia would attack Ukraine. They did not believe that Putin's policies were criminal, and today, as you go to Chernihiv, to Trostyanets, to Bucha, to Irpin and to other cities, you and the Europeans can witness what this policy has done to Ukraine.

It's not just Putin's policy. It's the entire Russian policy. These Russian soldiers.... He was decrying facsim, yet he was behaving like a fascist. He was looting. These people live differently. They have a different mentality, and the entire world has to see and do something about it.

Russian troops are being neutralized by the Ukrainian army, and we are grateful for all the help you're providing in that regard, but we have to think more long term. Even if they do leave Ukraine, the aggression could come back. Today they're bombing Ukrainian cities where there are no Russian troops. We have air raid sirens every day. Sumy region was bombed today. How long can this go on for? We need economic sanctions. We need international influence.

I would urge Canadian cities and towns to rupture their ties with Russian cities and towns. You cannot be friends with aggressors. Let us forge these ties with Ukrainian cities and help Ukrainian cities rebuild.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have to go to Mr. Cooper.

You have seven minutes, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's Mr. Viersen.

The Chair: Yes. My apologies.

Go ahead, Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here as well.

Ms. Kravchuk, I'm going to start with you.

We know that the Russian military seems to be violating the laws of engagement during the war. I think the comment has been made that even war has rules.

We have folks from around the world who are coming to the aid of Ukraine. We have the Ukrainian army. We have Ukrainian civilians being armed.

What is the Ukrainian government doing to educate those who are fighting for Ukraine on international humanitarian law and the rules of engagement, how to identify some of these crimes that have been committed and how to report those, because they are the people who are on the ground there? They're eyewitnesses to this. Is anything being done to ensure that they are capable of identifying war crimes and capable of reporting these war crimes? Is there anything being done in that regard?

• (1950)

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: From the very beginning in February, we had a big network of NGOs that volunteered to help to collect the war crimes. These NGOs are working in the field of human rights defenders.

Also, as a former journalist actually, I would like to thank all the journalists who are working on the ground, because they are doing a great job right now. They go into hot spots, both international journalists from different.... As Yuriy Bova just said, they have tents of.... I'm going to give his phone number to a lot of journalists. He probably doesn't know, but I give it out. They are collecting evidence.

When I had a speech in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I was giving testimony of these principals I mentioned to you from Katiuzhanka, from the Kyiv region. These

testimonies were sent to me by a journalist who was writing in English, in German and I think in some of the Scandinavian languages. He just sent me these testimonies with evidence on who said that, and I delivered it to an international audience.

Of course, probably we're not that educated, and we didn't have too much training on how to report these war crimes, but we do put these onto paper and save it to give to an international tribunal, because everyone you see, every witness, is saying that. It's coming from the heart of every person in Ukraine that this evil has to be punished.

If I have 30 seconds I will maybe jump into the previous question about what can be done by Canada and how it can help. Together with putting this onto paper, there's also help in trauma counselling and help for women who experienced sexual violence because the numbers for sexual violence is very under-reported because women are afraid. They are afraid to be stigmatized, and they do not want to talk. I'm also an author of a resolution in PACE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, about women in conflicts. I found out that in, for example, the Balkans conflict, some of the women started to talk 15 years later. It's a long process and we would need this support in trauma counselling, especially because the women are not only in Ukraine. They also fled the country into other regions and they need to get this support in any corner of the world where they are.

Thank you.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: That's precisely where I was going to go next with my questioning.

We know that millions of people have been fleeing, mostly women and children. Ukraine has been a target country for human traffickers before the war and that's only gotten worse.

Is the Ukrainian government spending any time on trying to educate folks who are fleeing the country to watch out for the human traffickers? Are you working with the European Union on how to combat the human trafficking that is occurring?

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: It's really difficult to educate people who are fleeing the country with two or three kids on their hands, because it's a very hectic time. However, we do work with the European Union and commissioners and the European bureaucrats who are dealing with this. As for me, I went on a few trips. I had meetings in the European Parliament, and our counterparts in the European Parliament are aware of this problem. They're working together with their volunteers and trying to alert about this situation. Of course, women, especially with kids, are vulnerable groups for human trafficking. We do work with our colleagues in European countries to make sure that there will be fewer targets for that.

To conclude, we've been talking about all these atrocities that are happening and people fleeing. We need to go to what has caused that. The only way to stop these atrocities, to stop gross human rights violations, to stop people fleeing the country and being targets of human trafficking is winning this war and stopping Putin. There's no other way to stop that and to end all of the atrocities.

Right now, somewhere in Kherson region, Russians are torturing Ukrainians, or in Mariupol or in other villages that are under the control of Russian troops, at the very same moment. The sooner we get the heavy weapons, the sooner we'll kick them out of our country and liberate our land. We will end the atrocities and end human rights violations.

• (1955)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you.

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Trudel.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the four witnesses. The testimony we are hearing this evening is very touching, especially the testimony from mayors, who talked about everything that has happened in their cities. I thank them very much.

My question is for Ms. Musayeva.

Ms. Musayeva, from our perspective, we feel that this is really the first war being broadcast directly on the Internet. A huge number of photos of atrocities taking place across Ukraine is being posted on social networks, including Twitter and Facebook. Here I am thinking of what happened in Bucha. We saw the first photos of bodies on the street and, a few days later, we heard Russian officials denying responsibility and saying that Ukraine was setting them up.

How do you verify whether what is being reported is true and avoid disinformation? How are you doing that as a journalist?

[English]

Ms. Sevgil Musayeva: Thank you for your question.

Yes, it's important. As journalists, we've already faced and lived with the circumstances of an information war and a hybrid war for the last eight years. It started from the annexation of Crimea. I am faced with this personally because my family lived in Crimea during this time, and I remember how Russian propaganda lied about everything that was going on in Ukraine and in Crimea.

After these last eight years, journalists in Ukraine have good experience on how to fight this propaganda and how to protect themselves in these violations in the field of information as well.

What is my response? I think one of my favourite examples of how it was during this time is that of two photographers who were in Mariupol. Evgeniy Maloletka and Mstyslav Chernov filmed a lot of human rights violations in Mariupol. For example, they filmed and took photos of the hospital in Mariupol that was bombed by Russians. I remember how the Russian embassy in Britain first said that it was fake news, but the photographers provided all the evidence that it wasn't and that they took these photos.

How do we work during this time? We have reporters in different cities, of course. Actually, I visited Trostyanets, for example, last month and I met with Yuriy Bova. I saw these techniques with my own eyes.

Of course, we have a lot of open sources and choose how we control this information, how we control all these photos we re-

ceive. Of course, first of all, we were faced sometimes at the beginning of the war with some fake photos from a territory that was occupied by Russia during that time, but it was actually easy. We have a lot of open tools that help us to know what is photoshopped. A lot of other journalists work from this place and also give us the truth and give us an understanding of this situation.

• (2000)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you.

My next question will be for Ms. Kravchuk.

We are under the impression that the conflict is currently dormant. An attack has been ongoing for a month and a half. We may be under a false impression here, but it seems that Russians are not advancing and that Ukrainians are about to start regaining ground, in a way.

Information has been published according to which about 1.1 million Ukrainian refugees in Poland would like to return to Ukraine. Mayors have told us that some parts of Ukraine may be in rebuilding mode.

What is Ukrainians' state of mind right now?

Everything you have told us shows how incredibly resilient the Ukrainian people have been. It is currently difficult to know whether the war will end in a month or in three years. I don't think anyone has that answer.

According to you, how are the Ukrainian people reacting to what is happening right now?

[English]

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: You know, when I was returning from my trip to Strasbourg, I was taking a bus from Poland. It was a regular bus. There was no space on this bus. Everyone was returning home, so that's why we're asking people not to call Ukrainians refugees. They've not given up their homeland. They want to return. They're seeking temporary asylum in the countries they are in. They want to go home to their cities.

For example, in Poland, I went to a place where our externally displaced people are, and I met a family from Chernihiv. Their house was ruined, so they can't really come back right now, but I'm sure that we will rebuild Chernihiv. It will, of course, take some time.

In those cities that were not under heavy bombing, people are coming back right now. However, it's impossible to come back to the Donetsk region or to the Luhansk region. In the Luhansk region, the one million people who stayed, both in occupied territories since 2014 and free or freshly occupied territory, do not have access to water because the infrastructure for the water supply was completely ruined. You can't live there.

Right now, our troops are regaining parts of the Kharkiv region, village by village, every day. People can't come back the very next day. Yesterday, two women in the village, which was liberated three days ago, stepped on a mine and they died.

That's another thing where Canada can help us, because we know that you're very good in the demining process. That's very much needed, because right now Ukraine is the most polluted country in the world with mines and artillery that haven't blown up. We really need help with that.

On the other hand, we understand that we need our economy to be running. We're getting this financial aid, but we understand that our country needs to rebuild back to the pre-war economy. Where businesses can work, they should work. Where people can live, they should live.

Thank you.

The Chair: [Technical difficulty—Editor]

Ms. Heather McPherson: I didn't hear you, Mr. Chair, but I assume that was an acknowledgement of me.

The Chair: Yes. You are correct.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

First of all, I want to echo my colleagues and thank everyone so much for being here today and for sharing this testimony. As you can imagine, it's very difficult to hear, but it's very important that we hear it.

Ms. Kravchuk, I want to tell you that, when you were in Canada and you met with me and my colleagues, it was the impetus that moved me to bring forward the motion on genocide. Your advocacy on behalf of Ukraine is so vitally important, so thank you for being here again.

I have to say, I have a young woman who started working in my office, a Ukrainian intern, who brought me a flag of Ukraine that's been signed by soldiers in Ukraine. We both started to cry when she gave that to me. I want all of you to know that you are not alone. We see what is happening in Ukraine. We are standing with you. We will be there in the short, medium and long term. That's what I'd like to talk a bit about today.

When Ukraine wins...because we all know that this is the only option. Putin has to be held to account so that he doesn't continue to feel that, in another several years, he can invade again. We can't have this continue on. It has to be very set. We will be there to help make sure that the International Criminal Court is activated, that those crimes are being prosecuted and that justice is brought.

What I would like is some feedback from the mayors. From your perspective—from you who are on the ground, seeing the massive impacts on infrastructure, water and electricity—what are the

things that you need from Canada and the global community to rebuild in the short term?

I heard the call for support in demining. Obviously, we need to make sure that people have access to clean drinking water and medical supports. This is for the short term, but also the long term, because I think we're going to need something like a Marshall plan to rebuild Ukraine.

Perhaps, Your Worship Atroshenko, I could start with you.

● (2005)

Mr. Vladyslav Atroshenko: [Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:]

First of all, I think they need to...until we achieve our victory. To me, as a city mayor, I am communicating with different funds and organizations from European countries, but not only Europeans. There was a representative from Japan, from a big development fund. I know that there are all kinds of contacts and negotiations happening, but everyone is waiting until the war has ended.

I can talk about my city, the city of Chernihiv. We have made some preliminary calculations. They show that we have suffered direct losses of approximately 1.5 billion euros here, with destruction of property, houses and infrastructure, as well as roads, buildings, surfaces, warehouses and schools. Some of the schools have been completely destroyed.

There will be a lot of need for a lot of resources to rebuild. We will need new technologists. We obviously won't be able to do this on our own from our city revenues. We would look to outside resources to help us in our rebuilding effort. However, it can probably only take place after the active phase of this military campaign has concluded.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Mr. Yuriy Bova: [Witness spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:]

I think I am a little bit different from my colleague. I think we don't need to wait until the end of the war, but we should start activities. I can see on many of your lapels some Ukrainian pins with Ukrainian symbols. It shows your support. I know that you believe in Ukraine and believe in the Ukrainian people. You stand with us.

Currently our military is prosecuting the defence of our country to the best of their abilities. Russia is suffering heavy military losses in Ukraine, and we are hoping that this will prevent any attacks in the future. All of our people stand as one. We help our Ukrainian military personnel. We support them. As my previous colleague said, we're all hoping. We all want our people to come back to our cities, rebuild their lives, renew their lives, to continue.

Our city is 30 kilometres from the Russian border, so it means that we can be attacked at any minute, on any day, basically. We already are trying to rebuild what we can daily, using our own resources. We have received some offers of help, for example, from Poland. They are offering to provide us with the ambulances that we've lost—all of them.

We are already trying to rebuild what we can. We have restored one floor of the destroyed hospital so that they continue to provide medical services. I asked the chief pediatrician how many staff they had. Before the war, there was about 400 staff at this hospital. Now over 350 have returned. Can you imagine how quickly our people are coming back, how strongly they believe in our city and our country?

The Russians actually tried to remove everything. Can you imagine that from the city building they removed all the computers—not a single server, not a single computer left behind? Everything was stolen, removed. Even today, whatever help can be offered will be appreciated, because we are trying to rebuild. We're dedicated. We're helping our armed forces, which are now strengthening their defensive capabilities in and around the city. As the city, we are trying to provide them with any resources that we can. They need sometimes even shovels. They need all kinds of things, from low tech to high tech. Our people are actually offering whatever they have, whatever they can. They come to me and say, "I will do whatever I can do to help our city, from our civil defences to what can be provided to the military."

By the way, we are very well aware of the Canadian technology, how to quickly build housing, like modular houses that could be put up very quickly. That would be something that will be probably very useful for Ukraine right now, because I am certain that most, if not all Ukrainians, will be coming back.

• (2010)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go into the second round of questions. Given that we are considerably behind, perhaps I could ask the members to keep it restricted to one question, under three minutes.

First, we go to Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

I hadn't anticipated a second question, but I'm very pleased to have one.

I would like to actually put a similar question to what I did before, but particularly to Ms. Musayeva, because you are a journalist.

Obviously there is a certain form of documentation that journalists do, but that doesn't always hold up in court. Is there more that Canada can do to be able to provide assistance to ensure that any documentation right now will hold up in the International Criminal Court or any future tribunal?

Ms. Sevtil Musayeva: Thank you. That is a great question.

I know that we have already started an official investigation, but I think that we don't have enough war crime prosecutors in our country. I think that is how Canada can help Ukraine during this in-

vestigation, because I know that investigation has started, but our prosecutors are faced, as you can imagine, with thousands of victims in just Kyiv region, and you need to investigate every single case. You need to find all the evidence, and you need to gather all this evidence.

I have already met with some international humanitarian specialists and international humanitarian lawyers who already work in Ukraine, and they told me that they had never seen anything like that and that they had never seen such human rights violations as were in Ukraine, even in Kyiv region.

I spoke last week, for example, with one international humanitarian lawyer, and he told me that he will probably try to gather evidence for maybe 50 victims, but we have thousands of victims. We need co-operation with a general prosecutor's office, and I think it is co-operation not only for the investigation of such crimes but for education as well. We need to educate prosecutors on how to investigate such cases, because I think we have a problem with this.

I know that a lot of civil organizations already gather such evidence. One of them is a coalition named 5 AM, and this is a coalition of 37 human rights organizations in Ukraine. I would suggest working with our government, and I would suggest working with such a coalition of human rights organizations as 5 AM. I can provide you with their contact, but it's not hard to find.

Thank you.

• (2015)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Do we have time for Ms. Kravchuk to answer briefly?

The Chair: I'm afraid not, Ms. Vandenberg. We're keeping it limited to three minutes. You have my apologies.

The next round goes to Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for your, frankly, very disturbing testimony in terms of what is happening on the ground in Ukraine.

It had been submitted that sanctions are working, that they are having an impact. In that regard, perhaps Ms. Kravchuk, a member of parliament, is in the best position to comment.

Does she have any recommendations on how those sanctions can be improved upon in terms of better coordination among the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and other countries? Does she have anything to add in terms of how we can strengthen and make those sanctions more effective?

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: Yes. I surely can answer that.

The sanctions are harmful to Russia but not harmful enough for Putin to stop the war. He clearly gets a lot of money from gas and oil. In that regard, I am really thankful to Canada for being the first G7 country to completely ban oil.

Right now we are still waiting for the sixth package of sanctions from the European Union. The very end of it is probably being negotiated right now. In this package we will probably see a ban on oil, but we will not see a ban on gas. Gas brings a lot of money to Russia. By our count, Russia gets around 800 million euros per day selling energy resources. That's probably the same amount they spend for the war in Ukraine, every day. They get this money all the time.

Another thing that has to be strengthened is sanctions on banks. Gazprombank is the bank that is operating all these transactions with energy resources. It's not under sanction. It's not off SWIFT yet. We hope that Swedbank, another big system bank, will be on this sanctions list.

A total embargo on energy resources would do the thing. We understand that it's a long time. Help from the United States and Canada could probably be provided to countries to find other sources for getting energy.

Another thing that I think Canada could be very helpful on, and that you and members of the foreign affairs committee could work on, would be in trying to influence India. India is trying to stay neutral—to buy oil, to have business as usual with Russia. It's not a time to be neutral. Please talk to Indian parliamentarians. We're ready to have a three-country meeting between the Ukrainian parliament, the Indian parliament and the Canadian Parliament. Please help us negotiate in that.

Thanks.

• (2020)

The Chair: Thank you.

The next round goes to Mr. Trudel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you.

I have a brief question for Ms. Musayeva.

We know that, in a war, news media are targeted, including journalists, newspapers and television stations. In an article, you talked about an attack on a television tower in Kyiv, close to Babi Yar. That affected you deeply.

Can you tell us a bit more about that, Ms. Musayeva?

[*English*]

Ms. Sevgil Musayeva: Yes. I am one of the members of the civil board of the Babyn Yar project. Of course, when it happened at the beginning of March, it was a tragedy, and it's a tragedy that we are going through for a second time. As you know, Babyn Yar was the biggest mass grave of Jews killed in eastern Europe, in Ukraine. More than 100,000 people were killed in this place.

Now, when you are faced with this in the 21st century, of course it is difficult. I know from my Jewish friends and from representatives of Jewish organizations in Ukraine that they were shocked by this. Unfortunately, two days ago, for example, a Jewish cemetery in Hlukhiv was bombed. I know that the memorial for Jewish people also was bombed in Kharkiv in April, so we have already three examples of what has happened.

I think after all the quotes from Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov and what he said about the Israel government and that they were helping neo-Nazis.... You know that Putin even asked Bennett to forgive that.

For me, it's quite an emotional situation. I'm absolutely shocked this is happening in the 21st century, after what we went through in the 20th century.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Trudel.

The last round goes to Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you to our witnesses for the testimony today. I think I'll end today with Ms. Kravchuk and Ms. Musayeva.

I'm very interested in justice for women as we go through these horrible times in Ukraine. I wonder if you could both speak a little bit very quickly about the gender-based violence against women that we're seeing in Ukraine and how Canada can support women in being part of the peace process and receiving justice at the end of this conflict.

Perhaps I could start with you, Ms. Kravchuk.

• (2025)

Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk: Thank you.

It really resonates with my heart because my resolution in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is about women in conflict and peace reconciliation. It will be voted on in June. I could just draw from the conclusions of my resolution report.

First of all, we need the help of psychologists who deal with sexual violence during conflict because the number of these cases are under-recorded. We get just the tip of the iceberg because women are afraid to speak. Another thing that we could use from Canada is help for NGOs that are working in this field. We have the national action plan for the United Nations resolution 1325, as you probably do as well. There is a list of NGOs who are working with government on the national action plan. They are run by women.

Actually, yesterday I was participating in a discussion organized by Georgetown University based in Washington. We had very powerful speeches from women from NGOs who are working on the ground and who are staying in the cities helping their peers to overcome.

Of course, it's also documenting. That's another thing that our prosecutor general's office could receive. Also, the police are working on collecting this evidence and testimonies to actually put these cases to the international tribunal as well because these are clear war crimes that were committed.

We also need to understand that not only women and girls were raped, but men and boys as well. It has covered all ages and all genders. These cases are really horrific and those who committed them should be put into the tribunal.

Ms. Sevgil Musayeva: I want to continue about rape.

Two weeks ago, one of the hospitals in Kyiv asked me for help with providing abortions for women who were raped because it was a problem even with this. Yevheniia already described that it's a very traumatizing situation and women are afraid to ask about it. They can only ask for it in hospitals and from physicians. Physicians ask me as a journalist just to help with this providing. I think that it's about medical assistance and about psychological assistance.

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

This concludes this session.

Allow me, on behalf of the entire committee, to thank you all. What we heard was incredibly compelling, but also disturbing, if not unconscionable. Please rest assured that the resolve, the courage and the determination that you have demonstrated in the last two months has won you a big place in all our hearts. We will continue to stand with you. We're hoping for a very early victory.

Thank you very much for appearing before our committee. Take good care.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, now that our guests have left, would it be possible for me to move my motion?

The Chair: Absolutely, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, and I think it has been distributed so everyone should have it in both official languages.

Mr. Trudel, you have my apologies. I won't read it in French because, of course, that would probably not sound as good as you'd like.

• (2030)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. McPherson. Are we not supposed to go in camera?

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would rather do this not in camera. I'll just read it into the record and then hopefully we have consensus on it. It is:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Subcommittee undertake a study on global reproductive rights and justice, including the situation of reproductive rights and justice in the United States of America; that the Committee hold two (2) meetings on this issue; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Mr. Chair, we had a discussion at the beginning of this committee where we talked about pressing issues and making sure that there was time and space available for pressing issues. This is a very pressing issue that I think this subcommittee has an obligation to study.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Would anyone like to speak to this?

Yes, Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the interest of time, I just want to say that I wholeheartedly support Ms. McPherson's motion and I'm very pleased that she has brought it forward. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do believe that this committee is supposed to operate on consensus and I will just state that there will be no consensus on this particular issue. I think that, as the international human rights committee, we ought to be investigating actual human rights abuses around the world. The human rights of preborn children around the world are important as well, and I'd happily pursue a study on that. I would just say that, at this time, given the situation in the United States and the leaks that have happened down there, we should be monitoring it but I don't think Canada needs to be commenting in any way at this point.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Trudel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think this is a good motion. The only problem is that we don't have enough time to study that issue, as this session will soon end. We have only a few weeks left, and we already have a busy schedule.

We have a very important study on the Tigray conflict. Unlike the war in Ukraine, we are hearing very little about it, but I think that conflict is just as serious. So I think it would be very important to look into that.

The abortion issue that was recently raised is very important. But it is currently getting a lot of coverage. It is being talked about here and internationally, unlike conflicts like the one in Tigray, which is fundamental, and countries like Haiti, which is completely left out of the system and never talked about.

If we had an additional two or three weeks, I would agree to study this issue. Unfortunately, we don't have enough time, and I don't think this can fit into our schedule right now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Perhaps the clerk could give us a bit of a scan of what we still have left on our agenda. I think this is quite a pressing issue. Certainly, if we are looking at the reduction of rights of women around the world, we have seen the impact of the removal of reproductive health rights for people around the world, which has caused numerous deaths, and the lack of access to those services may have implications for Canadians and for the providing of services in Canada.

There is some implication for us. There is clear proof that the restriction of reproductive health for women causes great harm and death. It is something that is, as I think Mr. Trudel said, very urgent. I, of course, would never want to rank any of the crises that our committee has to look at above another, but this does impact 50% of the population of the world.

Perhaps the clerk could give us a bit of a sense of what our schedule is and refresh my memory.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We do have all of our meetings filled at this point up until June 21st. That includes our recognition of international human rights champions, Tigray, Haiti, consideration of our draft report that will be upcoming, and human rights in Iran.

The Chair: Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, personally, as do most members of this committee, support the motion, and I do think that this is an important topic and a very topical conversation that we should be having.

I'm mindful that this committee is also a consensus-based committee and that's an important aspect of how we function. I'm hoping that we can come to a consensus on this issue. I'd like to see us move towards that, if possible.

Again, I strongly support the motion.

• (2035)

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, was your hand up or down?

Ms. Heather McPherson: It was up again. I'll be very quick.

What I would say is that I recognize that, in the past, this committee has gone by consensus. I think we've seen some examples of how that has not necessarily been the way this committee has worked this time around, unfortunately, to my deep sadness.

Perhaps the solution is that we could keep this study on the record and potentially look at it in the fall, if that's possible.

The Chair: Absolutely. I think we can keep it on the....

Mr. Michael Cooper: There's no consensus.

The Chair: There's no consensus to keep it there, or...?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Look, I think we have a number of pressing issues, and I'm certainly not going to give my support to this study.

The Chair: Because we haven't taken a vote, automatically it does stay; does it not? This is just a matter of procedure. If something is not disposed of, it remains in the pipeline, so to speak.

Mr. Michael Cooper: In fairness, just to clarify, we have, at this point, a hypothetical Supreme Court decision in the United States. I guess in that respect, if it stands, it stands until the fall for consideration, based upon what we see unfold.

The Chair: Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: What Heather, our colleague at this committee, is suggesting is that it remain on the table for conversation after the summer, at which point if there's consensus, there's consensus. If there isn't, there isn't, but at least it remains on the table for conversation, and we can broach this issue at that point in time. That allows us to continue with the agenda that we've decided on thus far and then approach this issue after the summer.

The Chair: I guess we can now move to the next item on the agenda.

Perhaps we could go in camera right now.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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