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• (1835)

[English]

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

Today we will be starting our study of human rights in Ukraine and Russia. As well, we'll be hearing from the World Food Programme.

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

To all those joining us virtually, please note that translation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screens. Let me also remind you that when there is only 30 seconds remaining in your time allotment, I will give you a warning so you know you have 30 seconds remaining.

I would like to welcome our first witness, who is joining us from Washington D.C. and has kindly agreed to take time out his busy schedule. From the World Food Programme, we have Mr. David Beasley, the executive director.

Mr. Beasley, thank you once again for taking time to join us today for our committee proceedings. I'll turn it over to you, sir. You have five minutes for your opening remarks. After that there will be questions from the members.

The floor is yours, Mr. Beasley.

Mr. David Beasley (Executive Director, World Food Programme): Thank you. It's great to be with you again. I always like to be there in person, of course, but with the virtual world and how many crises we have going on, I think we're all over the place, spread thinly, quite frankly. Let me get to the point.

Before Ukraine hit, we were already facing a perfect storm of conflict, climate and the economic impacts from COVID. We had seen the number of people marching towards starvation spike from 80 million to 135 million people right before COVID, and then it jumped from 135 million to 276 million people because of the economic ripple effect of COVID. Within that, you now have literally 45 million people in 38 countries knocking on famine's door as we speak.

Now this was before Ukraine, and we think it's bad enough. We were already facing fuel and food price spikes. As you can imagine, the shipping costs were spiking as well. On top of all that, when we

were just starting to cut rations for people all over the world because of a lack of the funds that we needed because of this increase in prices, Ukraine compounded the situation.

The problem with Ukraine is not limited to the impact within Ukraine. It has a global impact, which we will get into. In fact, we will now see that number of 276 million go up to over 300 million in the next two months if this conflict, this war, is not brought to an end, and it will mean an additional 50 million if it does not get brought to an end within the next few months. It's going to compound catastrophe on top of catastrophe.

If you're watching the news, just like everybody is, you'll know that there are four or five million people who have already left Ukraine. You might say that they are the lucky ones. They're out of harm's way. They're being met at the borders with loving arms from strangers. People are taking them in, giving them food, and giving them shelter. However, you have 40 million people inside Ukraine who are literally in harm's way in multiple ways, not just in terms of conflict but also in terms of food security.

We're looking at an unprecedented European crisis, particularly post World War II. We've reached about a million Ukrainians inside Ukraine. We plan to scale-up this month to about 2.3 million to 2.5 million people, and next month to about four million people. We have about a \$600 million operation for the first few months. We have about \$160 million in hand, and we do feel pretty good about the next few hundred million. However, if we scale-up to six million people by and through June, we'll be completely out of money by the end of June.

For every person who is in harm's way and is fleeing, if we can't reach them inside a country, that means they'll be coming to the outside of the country, and we know what happens when we cannot reach people on the inside of a country. The price tag for humanitarian support is multiple times greater outside.

Now, not to get too much into the weeds inside Ukraine, but please understand—and I think the world is starting to receive this message—30% of all grain, such as wheat, is grown in Russia and Ukraine; 20% of all corn, maize, is grown inside Russia and Ukraine; 40% of all base products for fertilizers are from Belarus and Russia; and 30 million metric tonnes are now stuck in the Black Sea because of the conflict, because of the war.

Ukraine grows enough food to feed 400 million people. For 50% of our operations, we buy wheat from Ukraine. Egypt buys 85% from Ukraine. Lebanon, just two years ago, bought 80% from inside Ukraine. We're already seeing an economic ripple effect. At first, we thought that it would be primarily a pricing problem, but now, because farmers are on the front lines fighting, they are not planting. They need to be planting corn right now, maize. They need to be harvesting wheat in July and August. If they're on the front lines, obviously, they're not going to be harvesting. They're not going to be planting, and we don't have the tenders to the fields to make sure that the fertilizers are applied and so on.

We could have a supply problem, an availability problem, later this year. This is why I've been meeting with the G7 agricultural leadership to talk about what we can do to offset the potential decline of harvests around the world.

- (1840)

When you compound that with the droughts we're seeing in different locations around the world and particularly in China, which is having droughts as well as other issues, they're buying up as much grain as they possibly can. We're facing catastrophe on top of catastrophe, a perfect storm on top of a perfect storm.

We're already cutting rations in countries all around the world. For example, in Yemen we're feeding about 13 million inside that country, and we cut about eight million down to 50% rations, and there is a very good possibility that we'll have to cut that even further in the next two weeks ahead. That's just one example of the many countries where we are cutting.

As I have told European leaders, you must be careful. While you focus on what's coming at you from your east, you cannot completely neglect what could be coming from the south, because the Middle East and northern Africa are very fragile right now. If we neglect these two regions, you could really have a catastrophe upon catastrophe in the months ahead.

I have a lot more I could talk about, we'll say, but let me just stop right there and say thank you to Canada. You've been an extraordinary partner. Many countries are stepping up at a time like this, and Canada has really been a tremendous role model for the rest of the world to follow, so thank you very much.

I'll turn it over for questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your opening remarks, Mr. Beasley.

We will now open it to questions from the members. For the first round, each member has seven minutes.

The first member is Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Beasley, for being here. I remember approximately two years ago, as I think Heather would, when you last came to our committee. That was a very eventful meeting, and you gave us good memories.

That being said, you spoke a bit about Yemen. I've been doing some research on this issue. Can you share with us what the situation is currently in Yemen with respect to famine and food and what the World Food Programme is doing to alleviate the situation?

Mr. David Beasley: I appreciate your mentioning Heather. I didn't want to single her out, but she has been such a great voice for the hungry around the world.

Yemen is a very difficult situation. We've just come out of the field with a new survey indicating the number of people who are in really serious trouble. Food insecurity, we expect by June, to jump from 15 million to 16 million to about 19 million, and that's with a population of about 30 million people inside Yemen, so you're literally talking about two thirds of the population who are food insecure and are struggling to get a meal on any given day.

Understand that Yemen is a country where at least 85% of its food comes from the outside. It is a terrible situation. We have about 4.5 to 5 million people whom we would say are at IPC level 4, and that's knocking on famine's door.

Because of the lack of funding, we're now cutting almost everybody at IPC level 3 and trying to reach as many as we can at IPC level 4, which means that everybody at IPC level 3 is going to be headed toward IPC level 4.

It is a very bad situation and, quite frankly, the Gulf States need to step up more because we don't have the monies we need. That is our number one problem. This is all about money, and the Gulf States are not stepping up and doing what they need to do to help take the pressure off Western donors in particular. Because of the crisis we're facing in so many different places around the world right now, if we could just get the Gulf States, particularly with oil prices being as high as they are, to help in a substantive way with the humanitarian fallout in the Gulf region, it would take incredible pressure off for us to be able to reach the shortfalls we're having in Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and I can go on and on to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, for example.

- (1845)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you for that. I think that was really informative. I learned something from that, too.

Since I last heard you at this committee two years ago, a lot has happened, and COVID has hit us. Can you talk a bit about how COVID has impacted the work you do?

Mr. David Beasley: COVID has devastated our work around the world.

Let me just explain that very clearly. Pre-COVID, we had 135 million people in IPC 3, 4 and 5. In simple terms, that's not chronic hunger. That's a whole different number. The chronic hunger went from 650 million to 810 million people. Severe acute—in other words, marching toward starvation—went from 135 million to 276 million people.

Here's the really bad news. Governments—major donors like Canada, United States, Germany, the EU and others—were stepping up and responding in unprecedented ways. We averted mass famine in 2020 and 2021. We've averted mass migration and destabilization of nations because you stepped up. We thought that the COVID economic ripple effect would be behind us by 2022, the economies would start coming up and the poorest countries would also start to recover. Unfortunately, COVID cycled and recycled again, continuing the economic deterioration and devastation in countries around the world.

Compound that with Ethiopia, the crisis in Afghanistan and now Ukraine, and we're actually seeing conditions that are worse right now than what we saw right before the Arab Spring in 2008 and 2011-12. The conditions are much worse.

We can actually break down which countries we're very concerned about with regards to destabilization. These are the hot spots that we really have to keep an eye on. If we don't give them attention, we could have grave consequences. Without getting into further detail....

Also not many people know, but I think you do, that we are the logistics arm for the United Nations and major NGOs. We don't just deliver food. We bring medicines. For UNICEF, WHO, and UNHCR, we are that supply chain for the systems of ships, trucks and airplanes. When COVID hit and the airline industry shut down, we actually stepped up and began delivering the COVID supplies, ventilation, PPE, testing equipment and all of these types of things, as well as passenger service for ambassadors, first-world responders, humanitarian workers—

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: In the 30 seconds that are left, I'm hoping you could speak a little bit about climate change and how that impacts famine and food. Maybe you can elaborate more in other interventions.

Mr. David Beasley: Yes, that would be great.

Let me touch on this real quick. Last year alone, more people displaced were by climate change than by any other factor. It was the first time ever in history. There were 30 million additional people displaced because of climate alone last year.

We're seeing more droughts, more flash flooding and more shocks than in any time period we've ever seen.

Maybe I can get more into that a little bit later.

• (1850)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Do we still have time?

The Chair: You still have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: If you would like to elaborate more in the next 30 seconds, we have a small extension.

Mr. David Beasley: One thing that we believe is essential, particularly in areas that have been impacted by climate change, like in the Sahel where the Sahara is moving down about a kilometre per year with all the droughts and the lack of rain, is to rehabilitate the land when the donors give us the flexibility—instead of just handing out food, but actually helping work with the beneficiaries. I say this because the beneficiaries don't want to just receive food. They actually want to rehabilitate the land and strengthen their communities.

When we can come in, rehabilitate the land, put down water systems and couple that with homegrown school meals, amazing things happen. Migration drops off the chart. Teen pregnancy and marriage rates—like of 12- and 13-year-olds—drop of the chart. Recruitment by ISIS by al Qaeda, Boko Haram and al Shabaab drops off the chart. It's absolutely remarkable.

Go to my Twitter page at @WPFChief and you can see some amazing videos about the women. The women are amazing. They are so entrepreneurial. I could show you case study after case study. When we give them water systems and they're harvesting the things necessary from water, they end up not needing our support after a couple of years.

This one woman said that they were selling into the marketplace. She had bought clothes and medicines for her children and was now paying for her son's wedding. I was sitting there just thinking, wow, this is what we wanted. This was in Chad. There are many instances like it.

I could get into the details. For example, we rehabilitated over 3.5 million acres of land. When I say “we”, I mean the beneficiaries. It was land that was not cultivatable, but because of rehabilitation and working with our donors and beneficiaries, the land is now usable. People can survive and not be vulnerable to all the shock factors.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

We now turn to Mr. Cooper for seven minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Beasley, for being here.

I want to focus on Ukraine and specifically the World Food Programme's efforts there. I saw that the World Food Programme has recently warned that 45% of the people in Ukraine, nearly half its population, are concerned about having enough to eat. It's just weeks since the beginning of Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Can you expand on the situation and give us a clearer picture?

Secondly, can you expand on what the World Food Programme is doing? You noted that it's provided assistance to approximately a million people, which will increase quite significantly over the next several months. I understand that assistance has been provided in places like Kharkiv and Lviv, and that food supplies have also made it into conflict zones.

I'll give you a little bit of time to speak about some of those efforts.

Mr. David Beasley: Thank you very much.

I've been there already three times, and I'll be back there next week. As I was saying earlier, the Ukrainians who have made it to the border, as sad as that is, are the very fortunate ones in many ways. As I stood there looking at the lines, I saw that most of the people in the lines were women with their little children. The front lines of battle are mostly men, although both men and women are on the front lines of battle. Those who are standing in line with their children are in brutal cold weather, in lines that may be a mile long, all day and all night. Again, they're the ones who are at least out of harm's way in terms of combat.

Inside, in terms of trying to reach them, Russia, as you can imagine, is not some simple army. This is a very, very powerful military campaign. It moves by the hour and by the day. We're trying to position the supplies that we need, where and when and how, but the train system is impaired. So is the trucking system. Guess where all the truck drivers are? They're on the battlefield.

So we're working through a lot of these issues. We've reached a million people. We want to scale up, as I was saying, to two and a half million, then to four million, and then to six million. Now, for every million we try to scale up, it takes \$50 million to \$60 million, give or take, to reach that many people on a monthly basis. You just start doing the math. If we have enough money to go through May but we don't have any more money, then we have to back down from the six million and start doing just two million a month. What happens to the other millions who are really food-insecure?

It's a very, very difficult balance. We're looking now at how much money we can get in. You don't want 40 million people going to the outside, for certain, for a multitude of reasons. We're trying to partner with the government as well as others inside the country in terms of who can do what, where, as we move supplies around.

Now, here's a couple of issues that not many people see on the surface. You know that ports are completely shut down. You can't truck enough grain outside of Ukraine to make a difference. Ports are where all the infrastructure is, so we have to deal with that. The problem is that all the silos, the big silos for the massive supply chain, are full. If the harvest comes in July and August and we haven't moved those millions upon millions of metric tonnes of grain to the outside, we, meaning the whole world, will have a massive problem in terms of the supply chain globally in the fall without major outside offsets.

There are those types of issues as well as the harvesting issues, the planting issues and attending to the crops issues over the next few months. The wheat crops were planted right before the war started. That's in the ground, although you still have fertilizer and issues like that of tending to those particular crops. We've been

buying everything we can inside Ukraine to make sure it's utilized for the people inside Ukraine. The government is doing a remarkable job, as well, of reaching them. There are some places we can't get into because they have not been deconflicted. We are asking all sides, especially in the particular confrontational areas where Russia is, to deconflict so that we can move supplies in—

• (1855)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Beasley, I'm sorry to cut you off. I've just got two minutes and I want you to continue with that, but you also mentioned grain silos and food storage facilities. The Ukrainian foreign minister has said that Russia is actively targeting such facilities. Are you able to speak to that?

Secondly, with respect to the World Food Programme's efforts of providing assistance in conflict areas, have those efforts been impeded by Russia? Could you elaborate on that?

Mr. David Beasley: I can't give you the exact number of silos and other holding facilities that have been destroyed. We're actually trying to evaluate and receive that data as we speak because it's extremely important, but that has occurred. That's number one.

Number two, obviously, where there's active combat, our ability to move supplies is severely restricted. I sent a very specific letter of request to the Russian government just last week saying that we need deconfliction here, here and here. Martin Griffiths, head of OCHA, is over there in Russia today to further that discussion and I'm looking forward to hearing back from him, probably tomorrow, and seeing where we are.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Has there been any response from the Russian government to that letter of request?

Mr. David Beasley: No. I've talked with them on the phone and they will hopefully respond back pretty quickly. We've got multiple avenues and we're pushing.... For example, we'll be moving a ship to Mariupol to be able to move ready rations into Mariupol. We're going to be testing every avenue that we can. I'm asking for air lifts, air drops, shipping as well as trucking and trains, so I'm going to give everybody an opportunity to say no and in multiple ways. In other words, I'm going to give them multiple opportunities to say yes in multiple ways.

Let me just make one quick comment. Eighty per cent of our operations around the world are in war zones and areas of conflict, so we know how to push and press and do what we need to do. This is a very complex and unique situation. We don't have any airspace right now. We're hoping to get some airspace, but at the same time, it's a massive military operation and we're making fluid decisions on a day-to-day basis. Obviously, when the Russian military pulls back we hopefully, along with others, will be coming in to at least supply, whether it's on a short-term, temporary basis.... But again, my biggest issue going forward, probably in addition to access, is going to be money and money.

- (1900)

The Chair: We'll now turn to Monsieur Trudel.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Beasley, I am very happy to meet you. This is the first time I am hearing you speak. Everything you talked about is passionate.

I will continue in the same vein as my colleague. Here, in Canada and in Quebec, we are far from the conflict, but there have been a few mentions of a humanitarian corridor being opened in Mariupol, so that people can come out. That seems complicated. Russia said it would open a corridor, but the seven or eight attempts to do so have failed.

Do you know anything about that? What is so complicated, in terms of logistics, about opening a humanitarian corridor in a country at war?

[*English*]

Mr. David Beasley: I think what you just stated is pretty much the fact that we're all still struggling on this humanitarian corridor, whether it's personnel moving in or moving out, or food, medicines and other supplies moving in or out. Mariupol is still a catastrophe. I think we're all doing everything we can.

As you well know, the Security Council is in a quagmire given the situation that Russia is engaged in this war and sits on the Security Council. It's a complexity.

We look for every opportunity we can to move supplies in, in any way we possibly can. We're always thinking outside the box and we'll be doing the same thing there. We will make known at the right critical moment, when we can't reach whom we need to reach, who the problem is. I wish I had a simple, good answer for you on this one, but you realize we're all struggling.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: I understand. Thank you, Mr. Beasley.

You talked earlier about the consequences countries such as Yemen and Egypt would suffer if the conflict continued.

Are there any other countries that are already in a critical situation and that could go through difficult periods if the conflict continued?

[*English*]

Mr. David Beasley: Yes, there are a minimum of about 38 countries, but let me give you a couple more examples. Syria continues to deteriorate as we speak. For Lebanon, who would have ever believed that we are now scaling up to reach 1.5 million Lebanese people—not Syrian refugees in Lebanon; we are already supporting them. Lebanon is in a crisis. I think 81% of all the wheat that Lebanon gave to its people or sold to the markets in Lebanon two years ago was from Ukraine, and maybe Russia factored into that too, so you can see.

In the Black Sea, you now have water mines all over the place, and moving cargo in and out is very seriously complex. Now, when you consider that 30% of all the grain comes from that area, you have to then realize that's 7.8 million people who are in the market for that 30% of that grain. Then you consider that 50% of our wheat comes from Ukraine, and we feed 125 million people. I'll give you a factor that's going to be really shocking: Just for the World Food Programme, the monthly increase in expense is already \$71 million. That's \$850 million in increased costs based on food pricing, fuel costs as well as shipping costs. That means we'll be feeding, at a minimum, four million to five million fewer people this year. As I was alluding to earlier, in Niger we're already at 50% rations. In Chad we're reaching 50% of those who need to be reached, and those 50% we're reaching are getting only 50% rations. In Ethiopia food insecurity is going up, up, up because there are massive droughts taking place there. There's Somaliland in Somalia, and I could keep going from country to country to country.

Now, also, in your hemisphere, the western hemisphere, in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, for example, there's unprecedented flash flooding. We're seeing now, based on our surveys, four to seven times the number of people who are now considering migrating inward toward the United States border.

I call it a ring of fire now. From Central America to Africa, all the way from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, from the Sahel all the way down to the Middle East and then to Afghanistan, it's like you have a ring of fire all the way around the world. If we don't respond strategically and effectively, the whole planet is going to be engulfed. It's going to be hell on earth in the fall if we don't get ahead of this thing quickly.

- (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: It's very clear, Mr. Beasley.

When it comes to the prevalence of food insecurity around the world, is a difference noted between men and women? Are men and women affected differently? If so, how are they affected differently and in what parts of the world?

[English]

Mr. David Beasley: When you have conflict and food insecurity, it's always the women and children who suffer the most. All studies show that. More important than a study, anecdotal evidence from what we see on the ground is a clear indication of that. This is when we come in, when we set up our systems, working with, for example, your government to make certain we can reach equally everybody who's impaired. Regardless of their sex, regardless of their politics, regardless of anything, we make certain that we can reach everybody who's in need. In fact, we try to really promote a lot of women's programs, and we do that in a lot of different ways that we don't have time to get into today. When we do school meal programs, we do those, for example, not just for boys. We do them for little girls and little boys. For example, in Afghanistan, we are feeding millions of little boys and little girls in schools now even though the Taliban stops any girls in sixth grade and above from going to school. We are pushing and negotiating, and it's like, look, we're going to reach the boys and the girls, not just one half. We try to use food as a way of achieving human rights and opportunities for a lot of people. Afghanistan is in a very delicate situation as we speak, as you can only imagine. We want to make certain we empower women and give women opportunities. It's not just there; it's from Yemen to as many other places as you can imagine.

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, the floor is yours for seven minutes.

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

I do want to thank Mr. Beasley for being with us today. I always feel hopeful after these conversations, and I find it fascinating that you're sharing such difficult stories with us, yet I feel there is hope and there are things that we can do and ways we can all work together to solve some of these crises we're hearing about.

I'm thankful to my colleagues for asking many questions about what's happening in Ukraine. Of course, that is a pressing issue for us right now, but you said during your testimony that our focus on the east means that we cannot lose focus on what's happening in the south and in other countries.

I'm seized by the idea that Afghanistan.... We were talking in the House of Commons just six months ago about the humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan, with 23 million people at risk of starvation in that country.

I'm wondering whether you can talk a little more about what is happening in Afghanistan, what Canada can do to help, and perhaps some of the impacts on some of the Criminal Code barriers that have been put in place that need to be removed if we can be as effective as possible.

Mr. David Beasley: Heather, thank you.

It's hard to believe, whether it's Ukraine or not, with Ukraine for example going from a bread basket to bread lines. We don't want to take food from the children in Chad to give to the children in

Ukraine. That's the last thing we want to do. That's why we're asking everyone....

With international funding, you're going to have to be very strategic this year. You can't fund everything; you have to prioritize. As I say, we need to be certain to avoid the icebergs in front of the Titanic. We may have to let go of the broken wine glass in the barroom inside the Titanic. What are the vital issues? Food security is obviously one of those.

In Afghanistan, with the Taliban it's been interesting. They have co-operated with us in a surprisingly positive way. I want to put that out at the beginning. When I met with them—as I would meet with anybody, Houthi, Taliban whoever it may be—I'm always very clear. I say that we don't have enough money now to reach all of the people we need to reach. I said, "If you play games with us, I can assure you that our donors are going to maximize every dollar to go to the place where we can reach the most children." I said, "Please don't play games with us."

They had been really co-operating with us and allowing us impartiality, neutrality and independence to achieve our goals and objectives in many ways. They were allowing women to come back to work with us, and they were allowing us to reach the girls in schools; however, in the last few weeks we've seen it going the other way. We have run into a few places where they're trying to tell us whom we can hire and whom we can support and feed. We've shut down operations in a couple places. Usually that triggers a response that gets it resolved.

We had some problems in the first few months. It was really quite remarkable how positively they did respond. We seem to see a shift right now going in a direction that we're very concerned about inside Afghanistan. We're reaching about 15 million to 16 million out of a nation of 41 million people. Twenty-two million people are in IPC 3, 4, and 5. Out of that, 8.7 million are at IPC 4, meaning they are knocking on famine's door.

We are trying to reach with at least full rations to those at IPC level 4, but we're reaching 16 million with part rations and full rations. However, if the Taliban continues to move in this wrong direction, donors are going to lose complete confidence, and that's going to really create havoc inside Afghanistan, as you can only imagine.

● (1910)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Of course. This is one of those things. I'm hearing you talk about where these hot spots are, and they're all around the world, and it's happening all over. Really, we do need to contribute more towards fixing the problem in the short term and the long term.

One of my big concerns, and I've raised this several times, is that Canada may be using vaccine dosages as contributions to our ODA. That means we might be treating vaccines as part of our ODA and therefore reducing the dollars that go out the door for official development assistance.

What does Canada need to do right now to make sure that we are responding adequately to this? How can I as an opposition member convince the government of the vital need to push for increased investment in food security right now?

Mr. David Beasley: Well, as you can imagine, I get this question from governments around the world. You'll get this question: Why should I send money to Chad, Niger or Guatemala when I have road problems, bridge problems, school problems or health care problems in my own district?

My answer is really simple. I was a United States governor and served in politics. These are valid questions from taxpayers, I want you to understand that, but I say, number one, if you're not going to do it out of the goodness of your heart, you'd better do it out of your national security interests, because you're going to pay for it one way or the other.

Let me give you anecdotal evidence. For example, in Syria, we can feed a Syrian for 50¢ a day, that same Syrian, who, by the way, does not want to leave home.... We survey. You see everybody in Ottawa every day for two years.... I know what's going on in Ottawa. I know what the people are thinking, and I know when they're about to move and why, and what's going on. People don't want to leave home.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's a big stretch, Mr. Beasley, to know what's happening in Ottawa. I don't think any of us know that.

I'm sorry to interrupt. Please go ahead.

Mr. David Beasley: That might not be a good example.

If that same Syrian, Heather, ends up in Berlin or Brussels, let's say, the humanitarian support package is \$70 per day.

Let me give you another example, this one on the United States border. The Washington Post did an article about the United States spending \$3,750 per child per week sheltering children on the United States border. For that same child and family, for \$1 to \$2 each per week, we can provide stability and sustainability with resilience programs inside their home country. We have solutions that work. We have to scale them up and fund them, and I don't mean to just throw money at international aid and throw money at the problem, because that is not the solution.

You know me. I'm pretty tough about how we have solutions, we have effective programs and we need to fund them. As to the governments like Canada, the United States, Germany and others, it's going to cost you a thousandfold more if you have destabilization of the nations that end up in war and conflict. If you end up with mass migration by necessity, it costs a lot more.

It would be like having leaky water lines in your ceiling and you have water just dripping and dripping. You're going to lose the carpet, the mahogany table and the curtains, and you're going to lose the flooring, and you're fighting over where to put the buckets. It's a

lot cheaper to go up there and fix the busted lines. That's what we're saying. Let's go and address the root cause. Obviously, when you're dealing with a short-term emergency, I get it, but many of these issues we're facing now are protracted conflicts. The more that the donors—the governments—can give us flexibility to do more with the dollar, that is also very strategic and effective so that we can have long-term planning.

• (1915)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

If we could turn to the second round, I would ask the members to keep their questions to under three minutes, please.

The first member is Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Three minutes, not five...? I'm just checking.

Thank you, Mr. Beasley, for being with us. I have been in a number of meetings with you over the years, and I want to say to you that I believe you're the right person at the right time in the right place, so thank you personally for your work. I will admit that I don't know that I would have said that when you were nominated, and it has been really wonderful to watch your leadership at the World Food Programme. On behalf of those of us who watch that, thank you very much.

I have two questions.

The first one is that usually you're asking just for money. It looks like we're in a position now where money may not be the only solution. The sources of food from Ukraine and Russia could be tied up, and it could be very difficult for you to get food for Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, etc. Do you have any suggestions with respect to how we navigate a conflict that is causing such a shortage?

Mr. David Beasley: You just bingoed the problem. When I joined the World Food Programme, I had a lot of questions. There were 80 million people marching to starvation. That jumped to 135 million, and almost all of that was due to man-made conflicts. This is what I've really been very vocal about in private meetings with presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers around the world.

You've got to slow down, and focus on just a few of these major conflicts and resolve them, because it's just adding up. It's like playing that children's game, whac-a-mole, where one pops up, you pop it, and you run over here and you do that one, and you run over there. I know that's kind of silly, but quite frankly, we've got to give serious attention to solving some of these conflicts that we have, because I do believe they can be solved.

In my opinion we can actually end world hunger by 2030. I still believe we can do that if we end man-made conflicts. Even with climate change, in the short term I believe we can end world hunger. We can respond and do what we need to need to do. The longer term or next 50 to 100 years is a whole different issue, but in the short term, man-made conflicts have to be brought to an end.

As I was saying about Ukraine, if that war does not end in the next 30 days, we will see an extra 30 million people in acute food insecurity. In the next 60 to 90 days, we'll see an extra 50 million people go into acute food insecurity. That, coupled with the other 275 million...I don't know, but it's just going to be a catastrophe on a catastrophe, and hell on earth.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll turn to Mr. Viersen, for three minutes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Beasley, and it's great to have you here.

I'm going to carry on with Mr. Oliphant's line of questioning. It appears to me that if there's no production, all the money in the world won't be able to fix the problem. What's your perception of Canada's contribution to perhaps increasing its production of some of these grain crops, such as cereal crops, canola, corn, and those kinds of crops?

• (1920)

Mr. David Beasley: We've been talking and hearing from many different political parties with regard to this issue, from the Green Party in Germany and others in Europe. We all realize we've got a very unique window before us, and we've got to respond. The last thing we want to do is to end up at the end of this year with not enough food for the people on the planet. That would be a catastrophe.

I'll leave it to you what decisions need to be made, but when you look at.... There are many issues.... We're talking with foreign ministers as well as agricultural ministers, as I said just a little while ago. We had very substantive discussions with the ministers of agriculture from the G7 regarding what lands could be set aside and what the different issues are that they might want us to [*Inaudible—Editor*] on a short-term basis to increase production.

I'll let you weigh out the politics of what might be permissible, what might be acceptable, or what might be doable. The last thing we want is to end up at the end of the year with not enough food for people in Ottawa, Chicago, New York, or London. I don't think we want to see what happens if that were to take place. We need to be thinking this thing through.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Do you have any recommendations on things we could be watching for that might reduce or limit our ability to increase our production here in Canada?

Mr. David Beasley: I'd probably have to sit down and specifically look at Canada, but one thing we are recommending is that you don't get into import and export bans. Please make certain that on the purchasing side, there's transparency. There are many different issues to be looked at. We're talking to many different countries and companies. Off the top of my head, regarding Canada specifically, I'd really have to look at that, so let us get back to you.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: That would be great.

You mentioned that 40% of the fertilizer comes from the Russia-Ukraine area. What is your perception of that impact and the rest of the world's ability to produce?

Mr. David Beasley: I was talking to the CEO of Yara, which is one of the world's largest producers of fertilizers. Not to get into all of those details, but if you don't put fertilizer on a particular crop, you could lose 50% of the yield. You can get into what types of fertilizers...and all these other different issues, but those are generic perspectives.

What I understand, and I don't know if this number is exact, but Belarus and Russia produce about 40%, give or take, of the fertilizers in the world. We are already seeing farmers around the world, particularly the big farmers, cutting back. Fertilizer costs are skyrocketing, because fertilizers are based on fuel. So you have a base fuel dynamic, and then if you've got a supply chain problem, those two factors will create an extraordinary availability problem, as well as a pricing problem. Obviously, we're already seeing pricing play into our equation. It will only become an exponential problem over the next three to six to nine months.

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

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Trudel, go ahead.

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

You talked earlier about the current repercussions of the Ukrainian conflict on other countries, and that was really good. You also said that those repercussions even affected South America. But you did not talk about a country I would like you to talk to us about, Haiti. That country was already struggling before the Ukrainian conflict. I don't know whether the conflict has a direct impact on the general situation in Haiti, which has already dramatic, but what can you tell us about that? Do you have any new information on what is currently happening in Haiti?

[English]

Mr. David Beasley: Yes, sir, before Ukraine, Haiti was a very serious problem. About 4.5 million Haitians, which is about 45% of the population, are projected to be severely hungry inside that country. I was there just a couple of months ago, and the corruption, the problems and the gangs are now being compounded by the issues in Ukraine, the price increases and the lack of money. It's a very serious issue. Looking at some [Technical difficulty—Editor]. That's pretty much it. I mean I can get you a lot more information on Haiti, but it's an issue of a money right now as well as of who we can reach in addition to all of the other internal factors. Haiti is a significant concern. We have a lot of programs and operations inside Haiti, as you can imagine.

• (1925)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: UN's second sustainable development goal set for 2030 aimed to end world hunger. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, we are not ready to achieve that.

What solutions could be implemented now to try to get close to the 2030 goal?

[English]

Mr. David Beasley: I don't think it's possible to end hunger by 2030 with the conflicts. I do believe, as I said earlier, that if we can end most of these conflicts, I have no doubt we can end world hunger. Consider that 200 years ago, 95% of the people on the planet were in extreme poverty. We've reduced that now to below 10%. The progress that has been made in the last 50 years is just absolutely wonderful, but now for the first time we're going in the wrong direction. As I mentioned at the outset of my talk, chronic hunger for the first time is going up from 650 million to 810 million. Severe food insecurity is going from 80 million to now about 300 million. We're going in the wrong direction, and almost all of that is due to manmade conflict. If we could end that, even with climate change, I believe we would have the ability and the expertise, especially when there's \$430 trillion of wealth on the planet, to address hunger. There's no reason why any child on the planet should go to bed hungry today with all of the wealth we have. We need to end these wars so we can have the money and the access we need, and more people are going to have to step up at a time like this. If they don't, as I said earlier, we're going to pay for it a thousand times otherwise.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Thank you again for the testimony, Mr. Beasley. You know, I was reading through the G7 statement that came out, and it sort of refers to some of the things that I think my colleague Mr. Viersen was asking about. This connection, this commitment by the G7 to step up collective contributions to the World Food Programme, to work with multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to prevent acute food insecurity, and the extraordinary session of the Council of Food and Agricultural Organizations, tools to make sure that prices are kept under control and that there is no sort of hoarding going on—we have these tools. You've also given us many tools we could use. We have commitments by the G7. We know we have to do more advocacy work to bring the gulf

states and others on board. How confident are you that this is going to done? We know it's possible. You just said there is no reason why every child in this world shouldn't have enough to eat. How confident are you that this is going to actually happen though?

Mr. David Beasley: Heather, you know if you had asked me this, probably, three years ago, I would have said I had 0% confidence. The reason I may be a little more confident right now is that in the last five, four or three years, if you turned on the television, it was nothing but Trump, Trump, Trump, Brexit, Brexit, Brexit, COVID, COVID, COVID. You couldn't get coverage on any other issue. For the first time, I think we are breaking through in the media about this food crisis.

I am a little hopeful, because I'm seeing world leaders respond now, recognizing that food security is a very serious problem we are facing around the world. It is not like next week you could just say, "I'm short of food. How about producing more?". You have to plan it. You have to water it. You have to grow it. You have to harvest it. This is not a short-term, one-month thing.

The response that I have been seeing so far has been remarkable, particularly from the G7, as to agricultural production and offsets to the diminishing return we may see inside Ukraine. However, I'm gravely concerned about the amount of money that is going to be necessary to respond in the short term for those who are not getting the food they need. I'm gravely concerned about that, and that's why I've been calling on the world's mega-billionaires to step up at a time like this. They should step up. They made, on average, a \$5.2 billion increase per day during COVID. There is no way they can't give us one or two days' worth of their net worth increase. I'm continuing to jump up and down on that.

Governments are tapped out. We have to hope that the agricultural community can respond, with from leadership from the G7 and others, but at the same time, we need to put pressure on the world's richest of the rich to give at a time like this, because the world is truly in crisis.

• (1930)

Ms. Heather McPherson: You let me know how I can help, Mr. Beasley. I am there.

Thank you so much.

Mr. David Beasley: Thank you, Heather.

The Chair: That concludes our questions.

I speak on behalf of every member of this committee to thank you, Mr. Beasley. We know you have an incredibly busy schedule. Your testimony has been incredibly informative and sobering. Please keep well. We need you to be in robust health, Mr. Beasley. Thank you very much for joining us.

Mr. David Beasley: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We will suspend for a few minutes to allow the second panel to do its sound tests.

• (1930) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1930)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order. Good evening everyone.

Allow me to welcome our three witnesses this evening. We are very grateful that you are joining us. I understand you are joining us from Ukraine and Georgia. We're very pleased to have you.

Allow me first to point out that for translation, you have the globe icon at the bottom of your screens. Please feel free to use that.

This evening, we are very pleased to have three witnesses. From Amnesty International, we have Ms. Oksana Pokalchuk; from the Center for Civil Liberties, Oleksandra Matviichuk; and from the International Partnership for Human Rights, we have Svitlana Valko.

Each of you will have five minutes for your opening remarks. After your opening remarks have concluded, we will open it up to questions from the members.

Ms. Pokalchuk, please proceed. You have five minutes.

Mrs. Oksana Pokalchuk (Executive Director, Ukraine, Amnesty International): Dear Chair, and dear members of the committee, I am humbled to speak before you on behalf of Amnesty International. Thank you for this opportunity.

Our organization has been working tirelessly to document the human rights cost of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. We have conducted both on-the-ground, and open-source research and spoken to dozens of survivors from various parts of Ukraine affected by the armed conflict.

First and foremost, I would like to stress that our organization considers the Russian invasion as an act of aggression violating the UN Charter, which is a crime under international law. It's important for the international community to work out a mechanism to hold accountable those responsible for this crime. We fear that the failure to do so will embolden others to follow Russia's current leadership's malicious example.

Russia's track record in past conflicts was abhorrent and our findings in Ukraine have confirmed our worst fears. From the very first days of invasion, Russian armed forces have been using weapons unsuitable for warfare in densely populated areas, using multiple launch rocket systems, unguided bombs and cluster munitions.

As Russia failed to advance quickly in Kyiv's direction, it engaged in ugly siege tactics, encircling such cities like Mariupol,

Chernihiv, Iziium and others, using its arsenal of indiscriminate weapons and killing civilians as a result. Several such attacks have been thoroughly verified and documented by Amnesty International and we can confirm that those attacks may amount to war crimes.

We have also been continuously raising concerns about the failures to establish safe humanitarian corridors for civilians. The situation has improved somewhat over time, and some, but not all, civilians have been able to leave besieged cities. I would like to stress that evacuation of, or delivery of humanitarian aid to, older people and people with disabilities remains a major concern. Those groups end up in extremely dangerous conditions and are virtually helpless.

Russian forces have been able to take control of several cities in Ukraine's south. They have been met with brave peaceful resistance from the civilian population. There have been multiple concerning reports of beatings and torture and threats towards peaceful protesters as well as abductions of local officials, journalists and activists. Our researchers are currently verifying those reports and we plan to publish our findings in the nearest future.

As reported by the UN, four million people have fled Ukraine. Even more have been displaced within the country. The international community must help in addressing this unprecedented crisis by sharing the responsibility and helping people fleeing to safety.

The resolution to this armed conflict will not be easy, but now more than ever the international community must stand united in its commitment to protect human rights and condemn the tyranny. Those affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine must receive the necessary protection, and in the long-term perspective everyone responsible for the war crimes and the crime of aggression, of course, must be held accountable.

Thank you.

• (1935)

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

We now turn to the witness for the Center for Civil Liberties.

Ms. Matviichuk, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk (Head of the Board, Center for Civil Liberties): My name is Oleksandra Matviichuk. I'm a human rights defender with the Center for Civil Liberties.

We have resumed the work of the Euromaidan SOS and have brought up several hundred volunteers to document war crimes. Together with other human rights organizations, we work in the "tribunal for Putin" coalition.

I'm in Kyiv now, which was being shelled by the Russian military for more than a month. Since the first days of the new wave of Russian aggression against Ukraine, civil society and Ukrainian investigators and prosecutors have continuously reported on various war crimes committed by the Russian forces. Russia has provided deliberate attacks on civilian objects like schools, hospitals, residential buildings and critical civilian infrastructure. There has been the use of human shields, perfidy, misuse of the Red Cross emblem, use of Ukrainian uniform and insignia by Russian soldiers, and attacks on specially protected objects like nuclear power plants and dumps.

Lately, it has become painfully clear from even this—it's not all—that Russian soldiers in occupied territories commit despicable atrocities against the civilian population. Rape and other gender-based violence, deliberate killings, torture, ill treatment, enforced disappearances and outrage against personal dignity are not rare and unfortunate, but rather a pattern of behaviour that is being tolerated, encouraged and later covered by the commanders, state media and the political leadership of the aggressor. Such actions are not justified by any military necessity. Russia is simply using war crimes as a method of warfare.

Speaking about prohibited weapons that Russia used during their armed conflict, the center has reported on the use of incendiary weapons. Free-falling bombs, cluster munitions, land mines, booby traps, etc. Russia is not party to several core instruments prohibiting, for instance, the use of anti-personnel mines or cluster munitions. In the densely populated areas, in the cities and near places of concentration of civilians, the use of such weapons is strictly prohibited even for Russia. Despite that, Russia disregards this portion of international humanitarian law as well as many other international laws and customs.

Russia undermines the meaning of life. In cities destroyed and deliberately isolated by Russian troops, like Mariupol, people sit for weeks in bomb shelters without food, water, electricity and medical care. During all this time, Russia has agreed with the international Red Cross on only one single humanitarian corridor in Sumy. Instead, Russia has illegally moved thousands of Ukrainians to its territory. The question now is, how can people without documents cross back across the border?

History is being written before our eyes. We are dying, but we are not giving up. For more than a month, we have been paying an enormous price simply for the right to a democratic choice. In this regard, we need western democracies to take necessary steps to stop Putin and to end this war in Europe. The Geneva Conventions and the entire international rule of law, peace and security are in ruins in places Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Mariupol and other Ukrainian cities. Massive atrocities against civilians in Bucha and other cities in the Kyiv region clearly demonstrate that Russia is simply killing unarmed civilians.

It will be strange to hear this from me as a human rights lawyer, but I will tell you that Ukraine needs weapons. Ukraine needs long-range air defence systems such as NASAMS to protect our cities. That would help us to close our skies. Russia has fired over 1,300 ballistic and cruise missiles. No country has provided us with this assistance so far.

We also need military jets to be able to control the sky. On the ground, we need heavy weaponry to defend our people, as well as land artillery systems, tanks and armoured vehicles. We need a lot of strike drones, more anti-tank weapons and anti-ship missiles.

● (1940)

We need your support because it's not only about the war between Russia and Ukraine. It's about the civilization of the confrontation between authoritarianism and democracy. Ukraine is at the forefront of this fight. We are ready to defend our people, our freedom and our human dignity. We are ready to defend the values of the free world.

I hope that Canada, and all democratic countries, will know not just ignore this.

Thank you.

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

We now turn to the International Partnership for Human Rights.

Ms. Valko, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Ms. Svitlana Valko (Crisis Response Manager, International Partnership for Human Rights): Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It's an honour to be here.

Last week, we met the Canadian team at the OSCE. I was really impressed by your delegation's level of access to information about the real facts of what is happening in Ukraine. It gives me a lot of hope that our joint efforts could bring those crimes committed in Ukraine to accountability in the future.

I want to start by introducing the International Partnership for Human Rights. We have investigated crimes and human rights violations in Ukraine since 2014, together with the local investigators from the Truth Hounds, an NGO. Our methods are very transparent. We try to verify each fact from at least three sources. We use open sources, satellite maps, testimonies of victims and witnesses and other sources that are available to us.

I want to emphasize that Ukraine and its citizens nowadays have critical thinking, and I want to emphasize that our people in Ukraine have started to treat living near hospitals or schools as being in the most dangerous places in the city. What I first want to draw your attention to is the intentional direct attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, arts, science, charitable purposes and historic monuments and against hospitals and the places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided that they are not a military object.

I have a lot of examples that we've documented of this violation and these crimes, but I want to give you an example of today's attack on the city of Mykolaiv, where those civilian objects have suffered. It includes one city hospital and a regional hospital, a centre for the prevention of diseases, an orphanage, 11 kindergartens, 12 schools, one vocational school and one branch of out-of-school educational institutions. They were all shelled today in one city, Mykolaiv. We have been documenting these kinds of indiscriminate attacks during all of the last months.

We want to confirm that you accept that these are intentionally directed attacks. The Russian Federation has used indiscriminate weapons in populated areas, with unguided or free-fall bombs, cluster munitions and incendiary munitions. I want to also mention that a lot of hospitals and schools were shelled a few times, which definitely shows their intention of shooting at these places directly.

I want to draw your attention also to the fact that most of their state workers and governmental representatives in Russia, including the state so-called journalists, before attacks on such places, very often—not only in Mariupol but also in Sumy and Mykolaiv—try to justify the targets by saying that there are troopers in the maternity hospital in Mariupol or there are some suspicious military vehicles on the territory of the hospital or school, which is never confirmed. We didn't find any testimony on that.

It is obvious that no matter how desperately the Russian side seeks to justify the inhuman attack by its armed forces on the maternity hospitals, schools and other protected objects, two things remain obvious: their manipulation of the facts and their lies about the reasons for the bombings.

• (1945)

Certainly, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth investigation into all the circumstances of these attacks. However, at this stage there are already more than sufficient grounds to claim that the Russian side has committed a war crime, for which all those involved should be held accountable.

There are a lot of war crimes to be—

The Chair: Ms. Valko, I'm sorry. You're over your time. Could I ask you to wrap it up in the next 10 to 20 seconds?

• (1950)

Ms. Svitlana Valko: Yes.

In general, we want to confirm that analyzing the attacks gives us reasonable grounds to believe that the latest attack is part of a strategy aiming to spread terror, break morale and prompt civilians to flee the cities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much to each of you for your opening remarks.

We will now turn to questions. We have seven minutes for the first round of questions. Just as a reminder, when there are only 30 seconds remaining, I will put up a sign. I would ask that everyone stay within the time limit.

The first round of questions goes to Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

Thank you to all the witnesses—profoundly, thank you—not only for your testimony tonight but also for your ongoing work to tell this important story to the world and to Canadians tonight.

I also want to take an opportunity to publicly thank Ms. McPherson for her question today in question period. I'm feeling emotional about this, because it was the only question I got asked, and I think this is the biggest crisis facing Canadians, of all the crises we're dealing with in the world right now, including our own home crises.

I have one first thing to say to you: We believe you. Those are three very simple words: We believe you. There has been a change to our language in these last days. We now, as the Government of Canada, are declaring that we believe these to be war crimes and crimes against humanity. We have taken the word “alleged” out of that very intentionally. While we recognize that they will need to be determined by an international court and international bodies independently, at this point the Government of Canada has received enough evidence from you and from others for us to declare that we believe Ukrainians are facing intentional crimes against humanity and intentional war crimes.

You have been heard. I want to very clearly say that to you tonight, hoping that this will encourage you to keep doing it, because we need the evidence that you are gathering. We need the testimony of people who are surviving. We need photographs. We need all the evidence we can get, because we're not there. We are privileged, at peace and rest in Canada, and we depend on you for your work to bring us that story.

We will continue to go to the International Criminal Court. We will stand with other countries to make sure that this testimony is heard there. We are already sending help to the court to make sure they have the tools to do the job. We also very quickly responded to the Government of Ukraine's request to support them at the International Court of Justice. We as a country cannot simply declare these as war crimes or crimes against humanity, but we believe them to be, and we believe that they will be determined to be, so we will be there.

Given that change in our language, this is an opportunity for each of you individually to take any other opportunity to give us any further evidence. You can take specific issues, if you would like. We were obviously moved and horrified by what happened in Bucha, at the maternity hospital in Mariupol, and in other places where civilians have been targeted. I would like to give each of the three of you an opportunity to add any more evidence that you would like us to hear as a committee, to empower us and to emblazon us to work on your behalf in Canada.

Anyone can begin. You're all perfect.

Go ahead, Oleksandra.

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: How many minutes do I have?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: You take your time.

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: I will start with the point that we gathered testimony from people from Bucha, Gostomel, Motyshyn, Makariv, and other cities and settlements in the Kyiv region, even before this area was liberated, because there were some lucky people who escaped from isolated towns. I just want to remind you that the Russians deliberately isolated these villages' support to provide people the possibility to relocate in order to stop local resistance.

We knew about disappearances, of course, about killings, about rapes and sexual violence before, but when I saw this photo and picture, and when our colleagues came to these released towns, frankly speaking, I was in shock. Even me, who has been documenting war crimes for eight years already...I didn't expect such a picture. It had a systematic and large-scale character. This was for sure war crimes, and even, I must admit, crimes against humanity, because all of the settlements were under Russian controls.

I will tell you one story which we documented before the liberation of this town. It is a story of woman whose husband and small son rode by bicycle to the centre of occupied Bucha in order to find humanitarian assistance and medicines. They were stopped by Russian soldiers. They immediately stopped and they raised their hands up. They said that "We are civilians", and it was very obvious that they were civilians. But Russian soldiers started shooting on them. They killed the father in the eyes of the son, and they severely injured the son. The son luckily survived. We spoke with this woman who lost her husband and likely saved her son.

Even a war has rules and has to be conducted according to international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law obliged this side to provide a clear distinction between military and civilians, but Russia used war crimes as a method of warfare. Russia deliberately targeted civilians. That's why we have enormous losses. That's why me, as a human rights defender, now thinks not only of how to provide proper investigation and collecting all of this evidence for the future justice, because future justice is always postponed in time.... But for me, the main question is, what I can do as a human being in order to stop these war crimes, to prevent new victims of war crimes to emerge. This is a much more challenging task.

Thank you.

• (1955)

The Chair: Now we will turn to Mr. Viersen.

You have the floor. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I'll turn the mike over to Ms. Valko, if she wants to answer that same question there around specifics.

I've seen the photos of folks who look like their hands were bound behind their backs, who are dead in the streets, things like that. Are there any other particular cases we should be aware of that will be brought forward to the human rights courts?

The Chair: Ms. Valko, I'm terribly sorry to interrupt. We have heard from the sound technicians. They are asking that you move the mike closer to your mouth, please.

Ms. Svitlana Valko: Thank you.

It is very hard to choose the story to tell you, because we have a lot of evidence. I think I will use this opportunity to say, on behalf

of the occupied south of Ukraine, because it's my motherland, and my parents now in occupation.... My father, on Sunday, went to the peaceful protest to support the cities of Ukraine, and they started to shoot the peaceful protests. The question about those people who were killed...and you saw those pictures in Bucha. That's happened all over Ukraine. All over Ukraine, we saw kidnapping and forced disappearance and terrorizing, using torture against leaders, against mayors, against journalists and against civilians, who do not have any position or interest and just were going to take some water to their family—to the basement.

On Kherson oblast, my native oblast, we have confirmed the enforced disappearance of at least 23 activists, and not all of them have been found already. Some people were found dead, like the head of village Motyshyn. She was found dead. She was kidnapped, together with her husband, and she was found in one of their mass graves in Bucha with traces of torture on her body. All people in occupied territories right now are terrified that this terror will continue in their cities and that this terror will be increasing.

• (2000)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Can you repeat the journalist's name?

Ms. Svitlana Valko: I'm Svitlana Valko.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: No, the gal you were just talking about who was tortured. They found her body. What was her name again?

Ms. Svitlana Valko: Her name was Olga—

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: It's Sukhenko.

Ms. Svitlana Valko: Yes, Olga Sukhenko and Igor Sukhenko, her husband.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mrs. Pokalchuk, do you have a statement you want to make on this as well?

Mrs. Oksana Pokalchuk: Yes, but I think my colleagues have already raised many issues and I don't know what to add. Maybe I'll quickly say that, honestly, I think you understand now that there are more and more stories and all of them are horrible—literally horrible. There are so many things.

Maybe the only thing I want to raise now is about the older people and people with disabilities whom I already mentioned in my previous talk. This is an issue, and there is a catastrophic situation with the older people and people with disabilities in the different cities that are under siege by Russian forces or that are occupied. We've been gathering evidence from many people in many different cities and villages, and all of them are saying that older people are literally dying without proper medicine or any medicine, without food and without water.

A couple of days ago, I documented the story of a person who was 87 years old. She was evacuated from Iziom, and I think you know where it is. She's very old and she's alone. She was evacuated and she doesn't have money. When my colleague was in her house, the only thing that was in her fridge was one egg. She had no money, no medicine, no food—only one egg.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you.

The Chair: Now we will turn to Mr. Trudel.

You have seven minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

I very much appreciate our three witnesses appearing this evening. I don't know what time it is exactly in Ukraine, but I assume is sometime in the middle of the night. Yet they are joining us to tell us about what is happening over there.

We learn about the war mostly through written media and social media. But you are providing us with first-hand testimony by appearing here today. I thank you very much for your presence.

Ms. Matviichuk, a number of sanctions have been imposed on Russia to try to end this war. One such sanction was Russia's exclusion from the SWIFT financial system. A number of countries have exerted pressure, but the war has unfortunately continued, and we have no idea when it will end.

Do you think the sanctions the west has imposed on Russia have had an impact or will have one? Are even more sanctions needed and, if so, what sanctions should be imposed on Russia?

• (2005)

[*English*]

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: Thank you very much for this important question.

Sanctions imposed are a start; however, there are not enough effective sanctions to, first, cut Russia's ability to continue this war and, second, force Russia—in particular, its top officials—to pay a high price for its continuing aggression. This is not happening.

If we look in detail of the sanctions imposed, we will see their half-heartedness. The Russian central bank says, as a result of sanctions, the Russian economy will shrink by up to 8%, which is nothing compared to the atrocities and destruction Russia has been carrying out in Ukraine.

Only a few Russian banks have been cut off from the SWIFT system. It's only a few, not all. These imposed limitations didn't affect Sberbank, Russia's largest bank. A result is that Russia is great at stabilizing the ruble, especially given that gas and oil prices have risen and western democracies have not yet imposed a full embargo on the energy trade with Russia.

Another important aspect is that Russia continues to receive large amounts of cash through energy exports. Bloomberg economic experts expect Russia to receive nearly \$321 billion from energy exports this year. This is an increase of more than a third from last year. That would be sufficient for Russia to temporarily withstand the negative consequences of the recently introduced sanctions before the impacts of longer-term sanctions become visible. A new energy embargo on Russian oil, natural gas, petroleum products and LNG is badly needed.

I think the problem is not that western democracies don't know what has to be done in order to stop the ability of the Russian economy to feel this war. The problem is whether western democracies will leave their comfort zone and take the necessary steps.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you.

Over the past month, we have talked a lot about receiving refugees in Canada, and we are pressuring the government to arrange an airlift to enable us to go get refugees from the countries bordering Ukraine.

However, we are not sure that the people who are in the neighbouring countries will want to come to Canada, which is across an ocean after all. We think refugees will perhaps go to countries closer to their own, in Europe.

What are the current priorities related to the conflict in Ukraine? Taking into account what you just said, how can western countries pressure Russia to end this conflict?

[*English*]

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: First of all, it's important to name things correctly. It's not a “conflict”, but a “war”, with Russia against Ukraine.

Several things have to be done. First, we ask that Ukraine be provided with fighter jets, air defence, tanks, anti-missile systems and other weapons.

Second, we need economic sanctions that will cut Russia's ability to continue the war.

Third, this war has an informational dimension, where disinformation, according to Russian Defence Minister Shoigu, has become another type of weapon. We need assistance to help Ukraine fight disinformation.

Fourth, Canada can build a coalition to set up an international hybrid tribunal to prosecute and convict Russian war criminals.

Fifth, binational assistance is needed to support Ukraine.

Sixth, we need international organizations to ensure an international presence and monitoring in war zone, occupied cities, and the evacuation of civilians. We need them on the ground to fulfill their mandates and to work with us, not to be in Geneva, Vienna, the Hague and other safe places.

We need you to stand with us in this dramatic time.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Ms. Valko, your hand is raised. Is that because you want to answer the same question?

[English]

Ms. Svitlana Valko: I want to add that I totally agree with Oleksandra. I want to share with you a fact that impressed me so much. Those troops who left the Kyiv region went to Belarus, went to the post office, and sent home two tonnes of Ukrainian goods which they looted from of the houses of Bucha, Hostomel, and Moshchun. Two tonnes. A lot of them are already identified. Those people are really in need of those goods, so they took similar things, like blenders, toys for kids, some clothes, and furniture. Two tonnes of goods from our homes were sent to Russian families in the far east. I think economic sanctions are the key in this work.

I want to add that Canada is also able to help us fight impunity in the longer-term, and to help use the possibilities of universal jurisdiction for different countries to open the case against those who committed those war crimes and crimes against humanity.

I totally agree regarding the presence of international organizations. We were at the OSCE meeting last week in Vienna. The OSCE monitoring mission in Ukraine was the largest in the history of the OSCE. It left the country a week before the war. The sense was that with its presence, what kind of monitoring and security could it provide for Ukraine?

We need a stronger position against Russia, and stronger informational support about the truth of what is going on in the country.

• (2010)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: We'll now turn to Ms. McPherson, for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much. I also want to thank the witnesses for what they have been able to share with us. Thank you for everything you are doing to document the crimes against humanity and the war crimes happening in your country. I'm so sorry this is happening.

Every member of the House of Commons today voted on a motion to acknowledge and name the things that are happening in your country as crimes against humanity and war crimes. Every member of Parliament of our House of Commons voted for further action and to do more to help the people of Ukraine than we have already done.

Today, I want to focus my questions on two things. First of all, how we can make this much worse for Vladimir Putin and the Russians? I want to talk a bit about the consequences. I also want to get some information from you on how we can help.

In terms of the consequences, obviously, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court actually defines war crimes. We have article 8, and we have article 7, crimes against humanity. Clearly, these are tools we need to use.

I'd like some information from all of you. Perhaps I'll start with you, Ms. Pokalchuk. Regarding how these human rights abuses, war crimes, and crimes against humanity are being documented,

how can Canada help with documentation and recording of those crimes, so that when it comes to the ICC, it is able to go forward?

Mrs. Oksana Pokalchuk: Thank you very much for this question.

What I wanted to mention during the previous question, I will answer now. I will cover both.

I would be very precise in my answer, but Ukraine was never prepared for the number of bodies that have to be examined now. We are now in a situation where we don't have enough fridges, and we don't have enough medical experts who can quickly do medical examination. I mean the forensic examinations. It's something very precise and detailed, I know, but it's quite important in answering your questions, because this documentation is proper. If the commendation will be in order, once we will have information about all of the bodies, it's something that will be the basis of our calls and for the whole work, whether it will be with the ICC, the International Court of Justice, or maybe other institutions that could be developed by countries one day to investigate what happened in Ukraine.

It's quite important right now to support Ukraine in this issue of forensic examination and fridges because, honestly, we have issues with the bodies of Ukrainians who were killed, or tortured, raped and killed. On the other hand, we have the bodies of Russian soldiers, and there's a big question of what we have to do with the dead bodies because we have to take DNA samples. There has to be a proper examination of dead bodies because it's a question of evidence. It's quite important for the future. As I said from the very beginning, Ukraine was never prepared for this. Our doctors and medical experts do their best and are working 24-7, but they're human beings. It is impossible because the number of bodies is huge.

I think it's something with which, if the Canadian government or Canadian people could support us, it would be a very big help.

• (2015)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Ms. Matviichuk.

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: I would like to focus on the possibilities of helping Ukraine bring the perpetrators to justice. I will start with the situation with the international court. The International Criminal Court has launched an investigation after a year-long break and only after the request of 39 countries. Its work is important, but international justice is delayed. Moreover, according to its policies, the ICC focuses exclusively on the top officials and selected specific cases. This means that thousands of perpetrators who have committed crimes with their own hands will not fall under its mandate. Therefore, in addition to the ICC, it's necessary to work in parallel on the applications of other legal mechanisms.

What can be done in addition? Canada could use the provision of its national legislation on universal jurisdiction to prosecute war criminals who have committed international crimes in Ukraine. Canada could initiate the creation of a coalition of states that would establish an international hybrid tribunal. This international hybrid tribunal could cover all international crimes committed during this war. It may, as well, have jurisdiction to address such a crime as aggression, which can't be considered by the International Criminal Court when it comes to Ukraine now.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Ms. Valko, I see that your hand is up as well.

Ms. Svitlana Valko: Yes, I agree totally about the slowness of the ICC, and a previous prosecutor always told us that she didn't have enough resources to investigate such huge scale crimes in Ukraine. The new prosecutor, three months before the war, said that we had enough resources in Ukraine to investigate with our own prosecutors, and that he was not going to open a case.

I'm not sure how many resources they have now. I do agree that ICC should be supported and financially supported by Canada, but I also agree that Canada could help Ukrainian investigators, first of all, with different pressure in the area of justice.

We have already been contacted by the Canadian Bar Association, and they proposed their help in opening the UJ cases not only in Canada, but also in South American countries and others who have this possibility, like Argentina and so on.

I do believe that Canada is already doing a lot in this area and is ready to help, but I also think that we should co-operate more in the linkage of evidence, and I agree that Ukrainians want to make all crimes accountable, and we really need some special tribunal and special procedures.

We do believe, for example, that Russians are now using FAB-500 aerial bombs. Those are 500-kilogram, high-explosive, general-purpose aerial bombs, which they were using before—the same weapon—indiscriminately in Afghanistan and in Syria.

The pattern of attacks and linkage or evidence are something we could co-operate on and investigate together, and probably there will be a lot of the same perpetrators who committed the war crimes before what's happened in Ukraine. It's very important to fight impunity and to show those people who committed those crimes in Ukraine and beforehand that they will be punished. This is very important for the future, not only of Ukraine but also of other countries that are threatened by Russia.

● (2020)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Valko.

We now go to the second round of questions, and I'll ask all the members to keep it under three minutes.

We will commence with Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I'd like to thank all three of you for being here and for your courage and strength, and, as you can see, all of us in this room are united in solidarity behind you.

Within the three minutes, I'd like to give half the time, if necessary, to Ms. Matviichuk. As a human rights defender, I hear what you're saying. I myself have a military background, but I have also worked in human rights for about 20 years.

I'd like to know how you square the circle as a human rights lawyer with your call for military support, arms and other weapons, to defend your country. Can you just square that circle for us?

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: I have expected myself to be in such a situation, because my main instrument over all of these 20 years I've worked in the human rights protection field was law, but now law is not working. Law couldn't protect people in occupied territories. At Euromaidan SOS, every day we received dozens of requests for help from people in Kherson, Melitopol, Berdyansk, Kahovka, Slavutych and Enerгодар.

They asked us for help, because they couldn't escape from the city. They told us about enforced disappearances; about threats; about beatings; about intimidation; and about illegal arrests of their relatives, neighbours and active people like journalists, human rights defenders, civil activists, etc. Unfortunately, I saw with my own eyes how the whole of HLAC, the humanitarian law of armed conflict, the Geneva Convention and all of international law, which I devoted my whole life to, now lay in the ruins and is not helping me do my work to protect people, their freedoms, their lives and their rights. That's why I made a tough choice—sorry, but we want to survive.

Sooner or later, the war will finish and we will be able to restore the international order, and I believe totally that legal mechanisms in the future will work and that the traitors will be held accountable for their work and face the international court or an international hybrid tribunal if we create it. But for the current moment, we are dying, and there is no other choice for us other than to defend ourselves from Russian troops and save our civilians. We couldn't defend our people, our land and our values unarmed, which is why I ask for weapons.

Even if I ask for weapons, I know for sure that Putin is not afraid of NATO; Putin is afraid of the idea of freedom. He started this war in 2014 when we had a revolution of dignity, ruined an authoritarian regime and obtained a chance to provide a great democratic transformation. Now in this war, we ask for weapons because we want to live and build a country where the rights of everybody are protected, where the judiciary is independent, where government is accountable and police don't beat peaceful demonstrators.

Thank you.

• (2025)

The Chair: Thank you.

We turn now to Mr. Cooper.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for providing important testimony detailing some of the egregious crimes that are being committed and have been committed by the Putin regime.

Seeing the deliberate targeting of civilians, the targeting of schools and hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, it is clear that these are not the actions of a few rogue soldiers, but as the witnesses said, part of a systematic campaign by the Putin regime. In that regard, I commend Mr. Oliphant in outlining the Government of Canada's position of removing the word "alleged" and calling these crimes what they are, which is war crimes.

Today, the U.S. and the U.K. called on Russia to be suspended from the UN Human Rights Council. Is that something you believe would be a small but important step if Canada were to join with the U.S. in that regard?

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: Do you want to start?

Ms. Svitlana Valko: I would say that we strongly believe that Canada should take this step.

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: I support this idea. I've personally participated and campaigned with our international organization partners based in Geneva to suspend Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council.

It's a huge shame to be present and to be responsible for the human rights mandates of a country such as Russia. It discredits the whole UN system.

It couldn't stop Russia right now, but it provides a huge signal to all top Russian officials and to Russian leadership that such behaviour is not tolerated and they are not a part of the civilized world.

Mrs. Oksana Pokalchuk: If I may, I will not comment.

Thank you.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

We'll now go to Mr. Trudel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Ms. Matviichuk, I would like to hear your opinion on the fact that Canada sent 10 members of the RCMP to

help the International Criminal Court in its investigation on war crimes in Ukraine.

Do you think that was useful? Is it important to do that now?

[*English*]

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: The work of the International Criminal Court is essential, but it's not enough. That's why I ask Canada to also think about other possibilities to strengthen how perpetrators are brought to justice; international criminal courts focus only on several cases, and we don't know what cases they will choose for investigation.

For us, it's very important to stop the cycle of impunity and to bring to justice all of the people who committed these war crimes by their own hands—all commanders, all political leadership—and who created the situation whereby these war crimes became possible. It's very important.

I have documented war crimes for eight years already. We have united in other efforts with Russian human rights defenders and with human rights defenders from Moldova and Georgia. We identified the same people who committed war crimes in Chechnya, Transnistria, Abkhazia, Ossetia, Crimea and in Donbass. I'm sure that if we united our efforts with human rights defenders from Syria, we would find them in Syria.

It's stated that Russia uses war as a tool to conduct its geopolitical goals. Russia wasn't held accountable for what it did in Chechnya. Russia wasn't held accountable for what it did in Abkhazia, Ossetia or Syria, even when it used chemical weapons against civilians.

It's time to stop this cycle of impunity. In addition to the International Criminal Court, we have to support the idea that the Ukrainian president announced yesterday to create an international hybrid tribunal. It would be very good if Canada decided to lead this process and to create such a coalition, which could bring this idea into force and provide justice for all of the victims of war crimes in Ukraine.

Thank you.

• (2030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you, Ms. Matviichuk.

I have about a minute left, and I would like to use it to ask one last question.

Could you talk to us about the current the situation in Crimea?

[*English*]

Mrs. Oleksandra Matviichuk: In Crimea we observe three main trends.

Russia, for all these years, has been rapidly transforming the former resort into a powerful base. They formed a joint military union in the central Black Sea and concentrated on ballistic missile attacks. Such actions are a danger for not only Ukraine but others, because they can achieve their targets in the Baltic states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Israel, Syria, etc.

The second trend is that the entire permanent population of Crimea is considered by Russia to be potentially disloyal. Therefore, after the occupation, Russia enforced a policy of expulsion of the most active part of the population from Crimea and replaced them with citizens of the Russian Federation from different regions through controlled migration. As a result—and I don't know the current number—the population growth rate of Sevastopol three years ago was an unprecedented 14%, so we are dealing with forced displacement and colonization, which in itself is a war crime.

The last trend we observed over all these years is that after the Russian occupation, the peninsula became a proving ground for testing new tactics of information warfare, suppression of dissent and formation of military moves. Essentially, Russia has conducted a unique experiment for today of integrating annexed territory, and they have components, such as the forced imposition of citizenship in the Russian Federation and a total attack on the rights and freedom of the population, to keep them in subjection.

The final thing I want to emphasize is the deliberate discrimination and persecution of the Crimean Tatar people, the indigenous people of Crimea. In our list of political prisoners, the majority of them are Crimean Tatars. My friend and colleague Server Mustafayev, who is the head of Crimean Solidarity, was imprisoned for a huge term in a colony, after fabricated criminal cases, only because he had the courage to provide human rights work in the peninsula where people were left alone with only Russian occupiers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Our last round goes to Ms. McPherson.

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

I want to give an opportunity to Ms. Valko to contribute to the last question that was asked, but I will also ask a quick question and she can answer it and the previous question as well.

One of the things I'm thinking about is how to help Ukraine now, urgently and immediately. I think you've given us some very good steps we can take in terms of forensic support, fridges, kicking Russia out of the United Nations Human Rights Council, trade embargoes and looking at the banking systems. There is a lot we can work on here.

I certainly will be putting forward something to this committee so that we have a statement as a committee, but in terms of immediate and long-term humanitarian support, I'd like some information on that. Canada should play a role in helping Ukraine deal with the humanitarian crisis right now, but also in how to rebuild the country

of Ukraine once this crisis is over and once this illegal war has ended.

Ms. Valko, could you start, please?

Ms. Svitlana Valko: If I could start with the previous question, I want to add to Oleksandra's words.

Most of the population of Ukraine sees on TV the propaganda that Kyiv is already Russian, that Kharkiv is already Russian and that Russia is everywhere in Ukraine and holds the cities.

At the same time, there is opposition to the Russian government. Most Ukrainian Tatars are very afraid that they will be mobilized to the Russian army to fight with Ukraine right now, and they are looking for different possibilities. They are supported by Ukrainian authorities in looking for different possibilities to escape this duty.

Also Crimea now, unexpectedly, became the road for some people from the Kherson region who are stuck in occupation to escape, so they are moving from Crimea to Georgia, Armenia and Turkey.

As we've already said, a lot of people from Mariupol and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are also trying to escape through Russia. Some of them are successful, and they sometimes appear in those countries without any documents. Some of them are not successful, because Russia takes all of their documents away and forces them to move to concentration camps.

Canada could probably advocate on this with international organizations like the Red Cross and others and also try to return those people or take them to a safer place to restore, not only their dignity but also their citizenship.

To the other question you asked, I think Canada provides a lot of humanitarian support to Ukraine, and we are super-appreciative of this. As we stated before, what we really need is some support of your own supports. What I mean is that some humanitarian trucks full of humanitarian aid have never reached their destinations because of Russians attacking humanitarian trucks and convoys, stealing them very often and then giving them as their own humanitarian aid to citizens of Mariupol.

If that humanitarian aid had some bigger support accompanied by some international organizations or some ministers of foreign affairs of Canada or other countries, it would be a really great support, because it's not only the humanitarian aid that is needed so greatly in Ukraine now, but also help to deliver it to those who need it most right now, including in occupied territories that have no medicine in the drugstores at all because there is nothing coming from Russia or Ukraine. In the Kherson region, they don't have medicine, and there is no possibility—no Russian government will—to provide those medicines there. There should be some pressure on them, not only from Ukraine but from other countries.

• (2035)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Ms. Valko.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Valko, Ms. Matviichuk and Ms. Pokalchuk.

I can tell you that your testimony has been incredibly powerful and compelling. I truly cannot recall another instance when I have seen all of the members watch and listen as attentively as they did today.

We want to thank you and salute you for the tremendous work you are doing. You will ensure, each of you and others, that justice and accountability do prevail.

We heard from you the many atrocities that are unfolding and that there is no plausible deniability for them. We also heard you say that we should, as an international community, use every avail-

able legal mechanism to ensure that justice prevails. Lastly, as a country, we should ensure that Canada does everything we possibly can to assist you.

Thank you very much for everything you have shared with us, and please do take very good care of yourselves.

Thank you.

Members, please remain.

• (2040)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, before we go in camera, it is 8:40. We are well over 8:30. We knew that we had business to do. I am recovering from COVID, and many of us will also get COVID, so as a motion, I would move that we adjourn.

The Chair: Absolutely: The meeting is adjourned.

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