



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 036

Tuesday, October 24, 2023



Chair: Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury

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• (1210)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 36 of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Please mute it when you are not speaking.

[*Translation*]

Interpretation for those on Zoom—you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

[*English*]

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

[*Translation*]

In accordance with the subcommittee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I am informing the subcommittee that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

[*English*]

Today, we are meeting to resume our study on the situation of the Hazaras in Afghanistan.

It is my great pleasure to welcome the witnesses who have joined us this morning.

We have Ms. Soomaya Javadi, a human rights activist, by video conference. From Amnesty International, we have Zaman Sultani,

South Asia researcher, by video conference. From Genocide Watch, we have Gregory Stanton, president, by video conference.

[*Translation*]

You will have a maximum of five minutes for your opening remarks. We will then go to questions from subcommittee members. I will let you know when you have one minute left.

[*English*]

Thank you for agreeing to appear today.

We will start with Soomaya Javadi.

Please, you have the floor for five minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms. Soomaya Javadi (As an Individual): Thank you.

Dear members of the committee, witnesses and everyone, I am honoured to be here today to testify on the conditions of the Hazara people in Afghanistan.

My name is Soomaya. I am a Hazara woman. My people have suffered from the Hazara genocide throughout generations. In the late 19th century, 60% to 65% of the Hazara population had vanished due to systemic killings, starvation, being sold into slavery and displacement by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan's army. His famous quote is, “Hazaras' heads are mine. Their wives, lands and children are yours.”

My great-grandfather was forced to leave his homeland in central Afghanistan when he was around 12, and his family was killed by the amir's army. Today I stand before you, having been forced to leave my home by the same people who forced my great-grandfather to leave his more than a hundred years ago.

This is a genocide. To this day, this genocide has not stopped. In 1993, the mujahedeen government commanded their army to attack civilians in Afshar, a Hazara-populated neighbourhood in Kabul. They started a killing frenzy—beheading, dismembering, raping, setting homes on fire, kidnapping and cutting people's genitalia. In 1997, months after I was born, the Taliban killed about 70 Hazaras including children in Qezelabad village near Mazar-i-Sharif. To demonstrate their hatred towards Hazaras, they decapitated children and gouged their eyes out.

In 1998, the Taliban attacked Mazar-i-Sharif. Based on different reports, 2,000 to 8,000 Hazaras were killed over three days. The Taliban did not allow people to bury their loved ones, and the corpses of Hazara civilians were on the streets for days. In 1999, the Taliban abducted hundreds of Hazara people—men, women, children and elderly—and burned about 200 homes in various villages in Bamiyan province. They confiscated Hazara lands and encouraged Pashtun nomads, Kuchis, to settle there.

After the 2001 international intervention in Afghanistan, this genocide found a new face. The Taliban and other terrorist groups have targeted Hazaras in their places of worship, in sport clubs, maternity hospitals, schools, educational centres, ceremonies, gatherings and peaceful protests.

On July 23, 2016, thousands of Hazara people, mostly university students, went on the streets of Kabul to peacefully protest a discriminatory policy of Ghani's government. I was 19 years old, and we were marching with friends and family when suicide bombers attacked the crowd. Eighty-six people were killed, and 400 were injured. I had a friend who was very close to the incident, and he could not eat meat for years, having witnessed burned human flesh. Our protests were ignored, and not a single person was prosecuted for committing that crime.

In the years before the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, there were many attacks from 2019 to the middle of 2021. Before the fall, the UN documented 40 terrorist attacks targeting Hazaras, resulting in almost 1,300 casualties. In 2020, a maternity hospital in Dasht-e-Barchi, Kabul, a Hazara-populated area, was attacked by the terrorists, and 16 people were shot dead including doctors, mothers about to give birth and two newborns. In May 2021, Sayed Ul-Shuhada high school, a girls school in Dasht-e-Barchi, was attacked by the terrorists. Around 90 students were killed, and 240 others were injured.

On August 15, 2021, at 6 p.m., I realized that Afghanistan had fallen to the Taliban. I was an educated Hazara Shia woman. I belonged to the ethnicity, gender and religion most hated by the Taliban. People like me still in Afghanistan—if not dead yet—are now totally excluded from every aspect of life outside the home. I had already faced gender-based and racial discrimination at the university and workplace. I knew the history, and I knew what was coming next.

Since then many terrorist attacks have targeted Hazara communities across Afghanistan. On September 20, 2022, there was an attack on the Kaaj Educational Center. Fifty-five high school students, mostly girls, were killed, and 124 others were injured. Marzia was a teenaged girl who was killed at Kaaj Educational Centre. Her diary was widely shared on social media. She had written about her dreams—riding a bicycle while listening to music, playing guitar, writing a novel. She was killed because she was a young woman in the pursuit of knowledge, culture and art, and because she was a Hazara with almond eyes, daring to dream of a future of equality and justice.

• (1215)

The Taliban explicitly supports the confiscation of Hazara lands and properties and the unlawful extortion of agricultural Hazara communities. International humanitarian aid does not reach Hazara

areas. To date, for people who have directly committed this genocide and people who have indirectly benefited from it—

The Chair: Would you please wrap it up? The time is up.

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: Yes.

There was no single prosecution done by any act of government.

I came to Canada on October 15, 2021. At the Calgary airport, another Afghan, non-Hazara family refused to stand in line behind Hazara families, and the Canadian police warned them and told them to get back in line. That was the first time in my life I felt I was equal.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the great nation of Canada for welcoming 40,000 Afghans and more. Within the borders of Canada, I am equal, free and included, and my voice matters.

I wish this upon every Afghan and, especially, upon every Hazara. I am appealing to you to recognize the Hazara genocide on behalf of my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my parents and me; on behalf of Marzia and all women in pursuit of equality; and on behalf of Hazara people across Afghanistan who are being forced to leave their land and give it away. We simply want acknowledgement and justice.

I am appealing to you to support a thorough investigation into the genocide of the Hazaras through the International Criminal Court. I am appealing to you to take away the Taliban's and its allies' impunity in committing genocide and crimes against humanity. The first step—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Javadi. We'll give you a chance when answering questions, because you are over by more than one minute.

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Zaman Sultani, take the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Zaman Sultani (South Asia Researcher, Amnesty International): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the invitation to appear before this committee.

I would like to start by noting how timely your study is.

For more than a century, the Hazaras have been facing continual and systematic discrimination in their own homeland of Afghanistan. Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, Amnesty International has documented several massacres of civilian Hazaras or Shia Hazaras in the Ghazni, Daykundi and Ghor provinces of Afghanistan. After the Taliban returned, the Hazaras faced forced evictions in several provinces of Afghanistan, including Daykundi. No one has been held accountable for these crimes and killings.

For example, in June 2022, Taliban forces, in a night raid, killed six Hazaras. That night, the Taliban attacked the house of former Hazara security officer Mohamad Muradi in Ghor province, which led to the Taliban killing him and three other men in his house. Two of the three other men were also former members of the security forces. In addition, in this attack, two of Muradi's daughters were killed, one of whom was only 12 years old. Muradi's son, who was 17 years old, barely survived the injuries he sustained during the attack. Muradi's stepmother was slightly wounded.

In August 2021, Taliban forces killed 13 Hazaras, 11 of whom were former members of the security forces. They were told to surrender to the Taliban and hand over their weapons. In addition to these 11 former security officers, two others who had no security background were killed by Taliban forces. One of them was a 17-year-old girl. Nine of the 11 members of the security forces were shot dead after they had surrendered to the Taliban. The execution of soldiers who are surrendering is a war crime.

In July 2021, Taliban forces, after taking control of the Malistan district in Ghazni province, massacred nine Hazaras from Mundarakht village. Six of them were shot. Three others were tortured to death, including one who was strangled with his own scarf. At that time, due to the Taliban takeover, the villagers fled from their homes to *iloks*, their summer grazing lands. Some of those killed were detained and tortured to death upon returning to their village to collect food—as they had little food for 30 families—while others were ambushed, arrested and killed by the Taliban at their check-posts. One of the victims, who had been suffering from depression, was not able to leave the village before the Taliban took over. He was killed in the village.

At the same time, in October 2021, Human Rights Watch reported on the forced eviction of Hazaras or Shia Hazaras from at least five provinces of Afghanistan. The forced evictions that targeted the Hazaras and former government employees were based on ethnicity and political opinion. Those forced evictions were conducted with a few days' notice and no opportunity to present legal documents. According to HRW, 2,800 residents were evicted in September 2021 alone from 15 villages in the Daykundi and Uruzgan provinces.

Despite this tragic situation, the Shia or the Shia Hazaras have also been facing widespread and continued attacks by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, as well as by other armed groups across the country. Since 2015, Hazaras have been a target at schools, on public transport, at mosques, during prayers, at sport clubs, at hospitals, at wedding ceremonies and during religious rituals. These attacks target civilians in civilian places. In some cases, each of these attacks left over a hundred or more casualties. One example of that is the Kaaj tuition centre, which Ms. Javadi just mentioned. Another is the attack that happened a few days ago, which left dozens of people and worshippers killed or wounded in Baghlan province.

The former government failed to protect the Hazaras against these attacks, and the situation is extremely grim under the Taliban. This includes the fact that the survivors' and victims' families have faced restrictions in accessing hospitals, clinics or their own wounded relatives. The Taliban is also putting restrictions in place on media coverage of such attacks.

With the Taliban back in power, Hazaras have been increasingly marginalized from decision-making processes and representation. The Taliban has replaced some of the former government employees in Hazara-populated areas, such as Bamiyan, Ghor and Daykundi provinces, mainly due to their ethnicity, according to the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. There is no Hazara representation in the Taliban's cabinet.

I'll stop here and would be happy to expand upon this further during the question period.

Thank you.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sultani.

Now, I would like to invite Mr. Stanton to take the floor for five minutes.

Dr. Gregory Stanton (President, Genocide Watch): Thank you.

It's a great honour for me to be here with you today. I speak behalf of Genocide Watch and the World Hazara Council, which approved my statement.

The Hazaras are the Jews of Afghanistan. The Taliban and ISIS have marked them for extermination. The Hazara people are among the most persecuted peoples in the world. The Hazara are an ethnic and religious minority who have been facing systematic persecution and genocide in Afghanistan for over 100 years.

The Hazara make up a quarter of the population of Afghanistan. Outside Afghanistan, Hazaras are one of the largest Afghan refugee groups in the world. UNHCR in Afghanistan favours Sunni Muslims, so very few Hazaras have been sponsored for resettlement in nations that rely on the UN refugee system, including Canada and the U.S.

Afghanistan is a country of minorities with none of its ethnic groups making a majority. However, the Hazara people, predominantly Shia Muslims, are a religious minority in a Sunni Muslim majority country. The Hazara have faced for many years—at least a century—relentless, systematic, genocidal massacres based on their ethnic and religious identity.

In the late 19th century, as one of our previous speakers mentioned, the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman, who united Afghanistan, also waged a brutal war against the Hazaras that killed 62% of Afghanistan's Hazara population. That is called genocide.

The persecution of the Hazaras continued into the 20th century. In the 1970s, the Afghan government did not allow Hazara people any access to higher education, especially in universities that trained candidates for army and government jobs. The killing of the Hazara people has been preached as a key to paradise by some Sunni Muslim clerics.

In the 1990s, there were at least nine genocidal massacres of Hazaras by the Taliban government and al Qaeda. Taliban commanders publicly proclaimed this slogan: “Tajiks to Tajikistan, Uzbeks to Uzbekistan and Hazaras to *goristan*”. *Goristan* is the Afghan Dari word for “graveyard”.

In August 1998, in just a few days, the Taliban massacred 8,000 Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif.

In 2002, the Hazara people of Afghanistan suffered over 300 targeted massacres. Since 2015, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, ISKP, affiliated with the Haqqani Network, and it has claimed responsibility for some of these massacres, giving the Taliban a way to deny responsibility, even though the Haqqani Network is part of the Taliban government. To date, none of these crimes carried out against the Hazara people have been investigated.

These massacres have all of the elements of the crime of genocide in article II of the 1948 genocide convention. They include killings of members of the group, creating serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group and creating conditions of life calculated to destroy the group. Under Taliban rule since August 2021, genocidal attacks against Hazaras have increased significantly. Hazaras have been attacked in educational centres, places of worship, maternity hospitals, sporting facilities, public gatherings and wedding halls. There was a genocidal attack on a Hazara girls school that murdered 58 Hazara girl students, yet the UN and the international press nearly always refuse to identify the victims as Hazaras and fail to note the ethnically and religiously targeted nature of this genocide. This is called genocide denial.

The Hazara people are enduring a continuous slow-motion genocide by attrition in Afghanistan. Urgent Canadian and international action is needed to protect the Hazaras of Afghanistan.

• (1225)

I conclude with the following recommendations: the UN, U.S., EU, U.K., journalists and human rights organizations must recognize that these systematically targeted attacks against the Hazara people in Afghanistan meet the definition of genocide—the intentional destruction of a substantial part of an ethnic and religious group as such.

The UN and national governments should initiate urgent consultations with Hazara organizations for the protection on the Hazara people. The UN Human Rights Council should establish an independent fact-finding mission to investigate the ongoing systematic attacks on Hazara people. The International Criminal Court should expand the scope of its authorized investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan to include cases of crimes against humanity and genocide against the Hazara people.

Finally, and this is the most important recommendation of all for the Canadian Parliament, we urge all refugee resettling countries, especially Canada, the United States and Australia, to prioritize Hazara refugees for asylum and resettlement. Canada must increase the number of visas for asylum seekers for Hazara people, specifically.

Thank you.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanton. Thank you for agreeing to appear today.

I will now open the floor for questions, but before that, I would like to ask the committee if, instead of having seven minutes in round one and five minutes in round two, due to the restriction of time, is it possible to have four minutes or five minutes in each round? What do you prefer, please?

I would like to start with Mr. Genuis.

You have the floor for four minutes, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you for your testimony. I'm going to rip through quickly then.

Ms. Javadi, I have been told that the National Resistance Front is inclusive of people from different ethnic groups and religious backgrounds. I've been advocating for greater engagement by our government with the National Resistance Front. From your perspective, is there a constructive relationship between the Hazara community and the National Resistance Front?

Would it be in the interest of Hazara people for western governments to provide more support to this and/or other resistance organizations in Afghanistan?

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: I'm not an expert on this, but from what I know, they do not represent Hazara people obviously. However, I support the organizations and people who resist the Taliban. Whoever is against the Taliban is with us.

That's my answer. Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Do any of the other witnesses want to weigh in on the relationship between Hazaras and the NRF or other resistance groups, and the wisdom of western governments engaging with resistance groups?

Okay. Thank you.

If I think about what we can do in response to the horrific violations of human rights against Hazaras, many of the types of measures this committee would recommend—sanctions, for example, or speaking out—given that the de facto authority in Afghanistan, the Taliban, are already a listed terrorist organization in Canada, it's challenging for me to identify what further actions we could take in the direction of isolating or holding the Taliban accountable. Listing as a terrorist organization is probably the furthest one can go in that sense.

There's possible engagement with the opposition and proposals have been made around immigration measures, but beyond that what could we be concretely recommending in response to these events?

That question is for anybody who wants to engage on that.

Dr. Gregory Stanton: I was legal adviser to the Ukrainian independence movement, Rukh, back between 1988 and 1992. Doesn't that sound like a long time ago?

I am strong believer in having diaspora communities support the overthrow of tyrannical governments. It can make a huge difference. I know that because they had that effect in Ukraine. In fact, I know some of the Ukrainians in Canada who made that happen. One of them was your foreign minister. The same was true here in the United States.

I strongly believe if more visas are given to Hazaras to come to Canada to resettle, even temporarily, it will have a big impact inside Afghanistan.

My major recommendation, as I said in the talk I just gave, is to greatly increase the number of visas that you specifically earmark for Hazaras from Afghanistan to come to Canada—that has not been done yet—specifically recognizing them as a religious and ethnically persecuted community, just the way the Jews were during the Holocaust.

• (1235)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I think we're out of time, but if the other witnesses have further responses to that, maybe others will raise it.

I also welcome your feedback in writing with those specific suggestions.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Now I would like to invite Ms. Vandenbeld to take the floor for four minutes, please.

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

I want to thank all our witnesses.

Just before I start my questions, Ms. Javadi, at the end you didn't get a chance to finish your remarks with recommendations to the committee. I'll just give you a few minutes to do so.

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: Thank you very much.

We simply want acknowledgement and justice. I am appealing to you to support the thorough investigation of the Hazara genocide by the International Criminal Court.

I am appealing to you to take away the Taliban's and their allies' impunity in committing genocide and crimes against humanity. The first step in doing so is to recognize the Hazara genocide.

Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

I'll pose my first question to Mr. Sultani first, but Ms. Javadi, can also respond if she'd like.

Certainly when there are situations where a group is not only marginalized and oppressed but also silenced, the possibility of getting information out to the rest of the world about what is happening in real time becomes extremely difficult. In that regard, I'm very pleased you're here and able to testify, but I notice that a lot of what you're talking about happened in 2021, 2022 or previously in history.

I wonder if you could tell us about what is happening right now in this moment. What do you know and how might we be able to learn more about the current situation, which I understand to be quite tragic and dismal?

I'll go to Mr. Sultani first.

Mr. Zaman Sultani: Thank you. Thank you for these questions.

Unfortunately, the situation to get information out of Afghanistan is very difficult, particularly from rural areas and from many others where the Hazaras are living. It is near to impossible to hear about or to collect and verify information on the atrocities that are happening in those areas. It is very difficult.

As I said in my statement today, the Hazara representations, in terms of the decision-making or the structure of the government whereby they can protect themselves, are the same. There is no change. Additionally, this year, we saw the Taliban put additional restrictions on the Shia Hazaras in terms of their religious rituals in general from the beginning, and then additional restrictions were introduced at the provincial level, as you can see from UNAMA's report that was mentioned today.

The situation involving forced evictions continues. In one case, it was reported without their being very specific in terms of who the perpetrator was and how it happened. In just the past few months, I think six people, Hazaras in Khas Uruzgan were killed. Several houses and properties were destroyed. When it comes to accountability, unfortunately, we don't see any accountability by the Taliban with respect to what they are doing. That is a very difficult situation.

I want to add another point. The situation of Hazaras is unfortunately one in which we and everyone else in the international community are asking the oppressors to protect the victims. If you look at the background of the Taliban, they massacred Hazaras in the 1990s. A key example of that was Mazar-i-Sharif, which could be considered genocide. It was so horrible. They did that in Bamiyan and several other areas. Some of that we have investigated. Amnesty International has investigated and verified and reported on this.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sultani. I'm sorry but the time is up.

Thank you, Ms. Vandenbeld.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mr. Trudel. You have four minutes.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for their very touching remarks about everything that's happening in Afghanistan right now.

My first question is for all three of you. I would like to go back to what happened from 1891 to 1893 in Afghanistan. You said, but I would still like you to repeat it, in turn: Do you consider what happened from 1891 to 1893 in Afghanistan to be genocide?

[English]

Dr. Gregory Stanton: Yes, definitely. The definition of genocide doesn't depend on the number of people killed. It is a legal term that is defined by the intent of the perpetrators. During that period and in 1991 to 1993, when the Taliban was killing Hazaras, the Hazaras were targeted because they were Hazaras. That is called genocidal intent. Definitely, it was genocide.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Dr. Stanton and Ms. Javadi, what do you think about it?

[English]

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: I totally agree with Mr. Stanton. If you look at the things that they do—for example, in recent years when they have attacked a maternity hospital to kill newborns or to kill women, pregnant women about to give birth, their intent has been to make Hazara people extinct, and that amounts to genocide.

It doesn't matter if it is recent years, 1991 to 1993, or a hundred years ago. The point is that they do not stop. They are not stopping.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Okay. Thank you.

How important do you think it is for Canada to recognize as such the genocide committed between 1891 and 1893, which you've just mentioned? If Canada, which is a major power, recognized this genocide, what would that mean for the community?

[English]

Dr. Gregory Stanton: That's very good, because Canada is an important power. In fact, I believe Canada has taken leadership of the world in human rights. I'm sorry to have to say that, with what has happened in the U.S.

However, it would make a difference if Canada recognized that genocide and recognized the ongoing genocide, which we defined as a “genocide by attrition”. In other words, you don't have to do all the killing in just a few years. You can have it going on for a hundred years, and that's what's happened.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Sultani, why do you think that Canada hasn't yet recognized what's happening there as genocide?

[English]

Mr. Zaman Sultani: As Mr. Stanton has rightly said, Canada is an important country. It's a powerful country, and it plays a crucial role in recognizing the atrocities that the Hazaras have faced and still face in Afghanistan, particularly in viewing that those who massacred Hazaras—if not all of them, most of them—are still in power, right in the Taliban.

In Mazar, they specifically targeted Hazaras for being Hazara. In part, there were some military people killed, but they targeted Hazara civilians only for being Hazaras. There were plenty of raids before that. Those Taliban who were in power at that time are still ruling the country.

This gives huge hope to the victims and to the people—not only Hazaras but others in Afghanistan—that justice can come at some point.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sultani. You'll have time in the second round for more explanation.

Now I would like to invite Ms. McPherson to take the floor for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. This is very difficult testimony to hear and, I can only imagine, extraordinarily difficult testimony to give.

I also want—and I mentioned this to other members of the Afghan community who testified before this committee—to give my sympathy to all those who are suffering because of the recent earthquakes in the region. We know the need to get development aid and humanitarian aid there is very pressing.

I want to start with Ms. Javadi, if I can.

You spoke about the need for acknowledgement and about justice being one of the key pieces that you'd like to see action on, but you also spoke about being in Saskatoon, I believe. You travelled through Pakistan to come to Canada.

We are trying to make sure that the government allows more folks who are fleeing violence, particularly the Hazaras and members of Parliament—those who are most vulnerable—to come. Could you talk a bit about the challenges you faced in coming to Canada and finding your way here through Pakistan?

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: Thank you for your question.

I think a big problem for Hazara people in Afghanistan is that they don't have access to foreign humanitarian aid because Hazaras are excluded from the political system and the government. They weren't in high positions in the government. They didn't have connections to foreign countries. If they weren't in very high positions, they didn't have enough authority. These things make Hazara people more isolated.

The way I found my way to Canada.... It was just a miracle and I was lucky. I am here, and many people who may be worthier than I am and who are at risk as well are not. It's just that I was lucky.

I know Hazara people inside Afghanistan are isolated. They don't have enough connections. They don't even have enough money in comparison to other ethnicities. All of these things make it harder for them to find their way out.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I could say that we're lucky you are here. We are glad you are here.

Mr. Stanton, I might ask you the next question.

You made it very clear that, in your opinion, genocide is happening right now. We've been talking about people leaving Afghanistan, the Hazaras leaving Afghanistan and fleeing their communities, and what the Taliban has done to make that happen. We know that forced displacement is one of those pieces of how we define genocide. It's in article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Can you talk a bit about how the forced displacement of the Hazaras is contributing to your interpretation of a genocide in Afghanistan?

Dr. Gregory Stanton: Sure. As opposed to some lawyers who would like to think that forced displacement and genocide cannot be done together, we think they're almost always done together. In other words, forced displacement is not only a sign of genocide.... What's happening is that people are being terrified and terrorized to leave a country. Part of that is the terror of genocidal massacres. These genocidal massacres—which are genocide—are a way by which the Taliban and ISKP have, in fact, forced a lot of Afghans to leave.

In other words, these crimes are connected. One is a crime against humanity, as you know. The other is genocide, which is really also a crime against humanity.

Our definition of genocide in the genocide convention includes creating conditions of life calculated to destroy the group in whole or in part. That's why it's a genocide.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanton.

Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Now I would like to start with round number two.

I would like to invite Mr. Ali Ehsassi to take the floor for four minutes.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to start off by thanking the three witnesses, Ms. Javadi, Mr. Sultani and Mr. Stanton, for their really powerful testimony.

On this committee, I think we can all agree that the discrimination that Hazaras have been facing has been long-standing and it keeps getting worse. You have spoken about the terror campaigns against the Hazara in Afghanistan. You have spoken about the confiscation of land. Thank you for all of that.

I will keep my questions very brief because we only have four minutes.

Ms. Javadi, at one point in your testimony, you suggested that humanitarian aid being sent to Afghanistan is not reaching the Hazara community. Do you have any recommendations on that particular front, so that we can ensure that it is being divvied up on an equitable basis and reaching the Hazara community as well?

• (1250)

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: Thank you for your question.

I know it's not reaching the Hazara communities because I hear from my people. I know that humanitarian aid organizations use the Taliban's help to distribute their aid. That's not a good way to do it.

I'm not an expert on this, but I suggest, if possible, using the help of local people to distribute the aid. That's a way to do it.

I would like to invite other witnesses to give their suggestions.

Dr. Gregory Stanton: I'll just say one thing.

When the UNAMA mandate—the UN assistance mission in Afghanistan—was up for renewal this past spring, we actually worked with the World Hazara Council to draft a new resolution to renew UNAMA's mandate. However, in the UN Security Council for that the pen was held by a Sunni Muslim country, so the State Department decided that a technical rollover of that mandate was what was needed.

However—and this is very unusual—on the same day, the UN Security Council also authorized, in resolution 2679, an independent assessment, essentially, by a human rights expert, which will be ongoing. It will require this human rights person to give a report every three months. That's how serious things are.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you, Mr. Stanton. I was talking about the distribution of humanitarian aid on behalf of the international community.

I do have one other question for you, Mr. Stanton.

You suggested that the UN system unfortunately overlooks the fact that the Hazara are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable when it comes to the resettlement of refugees. Could you expand on that?

The Chair: You have 25 seconds remaining. Please be quick.

Dr. Gregory Stanton: As others have mentioned, UNAMA is dependent on hiring Afghans to administer its programs. Because of the political pressure from the Taliban under this current government, UNAMA has had to hire a lot of Pashtuns, who are Sunni Muslim, so the religious discrimination that is present in Afghanistan gets absorbed into the UN mission. That includes UN-HCR—

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you, Mr. Stanton. I'm afraid I'm out of time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ehsassi.

I would now like to invite Mr. Genuis to take the floor for four minutes, please.

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

I was very interested, Mr. Stanton, in your comments about discrimination in the UN refugee determination system.

When I was previously on the immigration committee, we did study issues of systemic racism in IRCC, the Canadian refugee determination. I think this is an underexplored area, and it's important for our policy because we often rely on the UN refugee determination system. I certainly have heard these kinds of allegations in other contexts as well, that there are certain minorities negatively impacted through the process.

I would invite you to share a little bit more on that issue and some possible solutions. Possibly Canada could try to either work outside that UN refugee determination system or push these UN bodies to make reforms, possibly to include the voices of minority communities in the determination process.

• (1255)

Dr. Gregory Stanton: Thank you. Yes, indeed.

In the UN resolution that we wrote with the World Hazara Council, we had a specific section urging the UN mission to hire people from many different ethnic groups, but, as I said, because it was a technical rollover, that wasn't included in the rollover resolution for UNAMA.

However, this is something that you can have an affect on because the independent assessment by an expert that will be ongoing can certainly be influenced by expressions from the Canadian government to report on that. We urged, in other words, UNAMA to hire people from other ethnic groups in our resolution.

It is also possible, I think, in Canada, as you have put it, to work outside the UNHCR refugee system to accept refugees who come in and are supported by church groups, by many other people, by mosques, by all kinds of people. I think that's a really good way around this problem.

We saw the same thing in Iraq. I've been to Kurdistan I don't know how many times now. The UNHCR there was also too heavily influenced by non-Kurdish people, so Christians often didn't make it through.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Stanton. I think that's important testimony.

We had asked at the time for information from the government about the proportions of certain minority communities that were represented in our refugee resettlement, and we were told that those numbers weren't tracked, so we're not even assessing how we're doing in terms of being inclusive. It's a real problem that, even in refugee resettlement, we're not necessarily being inclusive of the most vulnerable in our processes.

In the 30 seconds or so I have left, Mr. Stanton, I wonder if... You do important work at Genocide Watch. I wonder if there are any other areas in the world with genocide ongoing or with a high risk of genocide that you'd like to, in a perfunctory way, point out to the committee for possible future study.

Dr. Gregory Stanton: The answer is yes.

I think that south Darfur, for instance, is under a genocide right now. Hundreds of people are being killed every day. There have been thousands, in fact. In our estimate, 6,000 from the Black communities there have been killed by the Janjaweed. The Janjaweed

has just been renamed Rapid Support Forces. These are the same people who committed the Darfur genocide in 2003.

I strongly hope that Canada will investigate that. I hope the UN will send in a peacekeeping force, a really well-armed peacekeeping force, or get a regional organization, such as the African Union or ECOWAS, to send in such a force to stop this genocide.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanton.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Trudel, you have two minutes.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you again to the witnesses.

You stated loud and clear in your answers that you recognize that there was genocide, which Canada does not yet recognize.

The subcommittee is writing its report, which could be used to lobby for Canada's recognition of this genocide. Could each of you, in 30 seconds, add anything of importance that you haven't already mentioned? They could be included in the report and help to ensure recognition of this genocide.

You can start, Dr. Stanton.

[*English*]

Dr. Gregory Stanton: I will, please.

We have actually studied this. Does using the G-word, "genocide", actually make any difference? We did a study back in 2007 to see what the difference was if people called it "ethnic cleansing" in four previous genocides, and what happened as soon as the word "genocide" became the dominant term in The New York Times, among human rights groups, in the UN and in lawyer use. It makes a huge difference.

If the term "ethnic cleansing" is the dominant term, no force will be used to stop it. As soon as the word "genocide" is used, the use of force becomes possible. It's still a very powerful word.

It was right after Srebrenica that finally NATO authorized the use of force in Bosnia. It was right after that declaration by David Scheffer, our war crimes ambassador, that genocide was under way in Kosovo, that we began bombing Belgrade, and they immediately surrendered. The same was true in Rwanda.

The exception that proves the rule was Darfur. Even though the Secretary of State said it was genocide, they couldn't get the UN to agree, so they sent in their own commission of inquiry that said no, there wasn't enough evidence of intent here so they couldn't call it a genocide. Guess what. That means the genocide was never really addressed, so it's still going on. It makes a difference if you declare that it should be genocide.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Ms. Javadi, on the same subject, what could be added to the report to strengthen it, so that Canada recognizes the fact that genocide took place?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have a few seconds, please.

Dr. Gregory Stanton: I think a good legal analysis is what is needed. You need to have experts on international law, and by the way—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Thank you, Dr. Stanton, but the question was for Ms. Javadi.

[*English*]

Ms. Soomaya Javadi: This genocide has happened to my great-grandfather all the way to me. Because this crime and what is happening to us doesn't have a name, we cannot address this, but if it has a name, you can prosecute this, and you can take away the impunity of the people who commit this and the people who benefit from this.

Nowadays people who have committed this and have benefited from it indirectly, they deny it. It hurts us. As much as what they did to my great-grandparents, as much as what they did to me, it hurts me when they deny it. This recognition is a relief, and it's very meaningful to my community and me.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I invite Ms. McPherson to take the floor for two minutes, please.

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

I agree with the question that my colleague from the Bloc just asked. I certainly want to give some space so we can hear from all of the witnesses.

Mr. Sultani, I know your hand was up, if you'd like to intervene.

Mr. Zaman Sultani: Thank you.

I wanted to say that the Hazara community has lost about 62% or more of its population. They have faced decades of perpetual

widespread and systematic discrimination. That is what and how the whole century of the history of the Hazara has been.

I believe this committee has the power and the tools to at least recognize what the Hazara have gone through and the challenges they are facing. Institutionally, opinions might differ, but to me, personally, the Hazaras have openly faced and are facing a genocidal attack, and that continues today. We see that from Daesh, and we saw that in the nineties, unfortunately.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I think that's a good place to end our meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, witnesses, for your testimonies and your participation in the study on the situation of the Hazaras in Afghanistan.

Please contact the clerk if you have any additional information for the subcommittee.

[*English*]

On behalf of all members of the committee, I would like to thank all the witnesses for their thoughts and for their participation. It was an extremely interesting meeting.

Thanks a lot, and have a great day.

If it is the will of the committee...

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I have a brief question.

I know we discussed future business at our last meeting; it was in camera. Has it been our practice to invite written submissions on those? Is that something that we should agree to do?

I don't want a surprise, folks. Maybe we can discuss it later. I thought that, because we are going to be starting potential new studies, it might be worth inviting written briefs as well. Are people comfortable with that?

• (1305)

The Chair: Yes. If the committee agrees, there's no problem.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. We'll put out then the opportunity, in the next two studies, for people to send in written briefs as well.

Thanks.

The Chair: Is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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