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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

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

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•(1305)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Welcome to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today is May 15, 2014, and this is our 28th meeting.

[English]

We are continuing our study of the situation in Camp Ashraf.

Joining us by video conference from Paris is Maryam Rajavi from the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

Ms. Rajavi, I invite you to begin your testimony. Following your testimony we will have questions from the members of the committee.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (President-elect, National Council of Resistance of Iran): Mr. Chairman, distinguished members, good day.

I would like to thank you for your attention to the ongoing human rights violations in Iran as well as the humanitarian crisis in Camp Liberty. I also want to express my deep appreciation for all of your efforts during Iran Accountability Week. Such efforts, as you said, sounds the alarm on the fourfold Iranian threat—nuclear, terrorist, incitement, and in particular the Iranian regime's widespread and systematic violations of human rights.

The situation in Camp Liberty is directly linked to the political crisis in Iran. Indeed what is happening in Camp Liberty is the other side of the coin of suppression in Iran.

Since the U.S. handed over the security of Camp Ashraf to the Iraqi government, there were three attacks on Ashraf and three deadly missile attacks on Liberty with 116 residents killed by Iraqi forces, 1,350 injured, and seven still being held as hostages. It has now been eight months that they have been held as hostages. Twenty residents have also lost their lives due to medical blockade.

Many years of medical blockade continue to affect even those who have left Iraq. Razieh Kermanshahi died yesterday in Albania because for many years she had not received the proper medical care. Mohammad Babai passed away in Liberty on April 27 because of lack of medical care.

So far as the PMOI members are concerned, they are paying the price for their perseverance for freedom of the Iranian people. The

religious fascism ruling Iran, engulfed by political, economic, and international crises, considers PMOI as the most serious threat to its rule. The PMOI is seen as the major force for change in Iran; therefore, the regime will not spare an opportunity to strike at this organization. For this reason, Liberty residents have become the prime targets of the regime's atrocities.

I would like to address three aspects of the situation in Liberty that are very important: the security situation, living conditions, and the resettlement of the residents outside Iraq. The prime issue is a lack of security in the face of missile attacks on Camp Liberty. Trailers are overcrowded, with no protective walls or bunkers for the residents to take shelter at the time of missile attacks. They are completely defenceless and vulnerable. Iraq's internal conflict and worsening security situation have increased the danger for the residents. Remarks by the Iraqi minister of justice on March 2 and Iraq's ambassador in Tehran on April 27 regarding the extradition of PMOI members in Liberty is yet another indication of the dangerous situation of the residents.

The second issue is on the living conditions in Camp Liberty. The human rights of residents are being systematically violated. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in two reports have described Camp Liberty as a prison. Residents have no freedom of movement. They are denied the right to have family visits or meet their lawyers, and they are under medical blockade.

•(1310)

The Iraqi government is also trying to steal residents' property left at Camp Ashraf and has so far prevented them from selling their property.

The third issue is the resettlement of the residents. After two and a half years since the residents started relocation from Ashraf to Camp Liberty, only 10% of the 3,200 residents have been resettled outside Iraq, and the prospect for resettlement of the others looks dim, while all residents have been interviewed by UNHCR.

The question is, what to do now?

One, the first step is an independent international investigation into the killings, in particular the massacre of 52 residents and the abduction of seven on September 1, 2013. These are the photos of 52 persons who had been massacred on September 1 in Ashraf. Had there been an independent investigation about the first massacre, and had its perpetrators been brought to justice, we would not have seen the following massacres. Such investigation would be a preventive measure. Therefore, I urge you and the international human rights committee to call on the Government of Canada to initiate such an investigation by the relevant international authority.

Two, to prevent another Srebrenica, the international community must provide security for the residents so long as they are in Camp Liberty by stationing international observers and a unit of blue helmets in the camp. By offering financial and logistical support for such an initiative, the Government of Canada can remove all obstacles and excuses.

Three, violation of the residents' human rights is part of the ongoing human rights violations in Iran. Families of the 3,000 Liberty residents in Iran are also suffering. Many of them have been arrested, abused, and some have been executed. A number of them are on death row. This matter must be addressed at the UN Security Council. I call on the Canadian government to raise this matter in the third committee of the UN.

Four, the Government of Canada can play an active role in the relocation of the residents by accepting a group of refugees from Camp Liberty and contributing to the cost of the relocation, and encouraging countries such as Albania to take more refugees.

In the end, I would like to thank the Government of Canada and Parliament for their firm position towards the Iranian regime. In recent years, the government cutting off diplomatic ties with the mullahs' regime and parliamentarians' support for the Iranian resistance have been heartwarming for our people in their efforts to achieve freedom.

The regime has intensified suppression because it feels more vulnerable. Despite claims of moderation by the regime's president, there have been more executions over the past year compared with any other year in the past 25 years.

•(1315)

Last month political prisoners in the Evin prison were brutally attacked by prison guards. The mullahs have intensified their attacks on Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty. In such circumstances, Canada's support for human rights in Iran, freedom, and Iranian resistance is more effective than at any other time. Our objective is a free and democratic Iran, a republic based on separation of religion and state, with gender equality and the rule of law, a new Iran with no discrimination against religious or ethnic minorities, and a non-nuclear Iran.

Thank you for your attention. I would like to hear your views. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony.

We have enough time to have six-minute rounds of questions and answers. We'll begin with Ms. Grewal, followed by Mr. Marston.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Ms. Rajavi, for your presentation. Certainly all of us do appreciate it.

While there were many promises made to the residents of Camp Ashraf during the relocation by the UN, by the United States and Iraq to name a few, perhaps what is most concerning about these promises are the actual physical conditions in Camp Liberty itself.

Can you elaborate on the current conditions inside Camp Liberty, and how this limits the safety and security of the residents there?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): If you would allow me, I'll continue in Persian.

This is a very important question because many commitments have been breached. The most important one is the security and protection of the residents in Camp Liberty. The reality is that Camp Liberty lacks any security. Residents are crammed in trailers without any protection.

I have photographs of the trailers that show they have absolutely no protection. If I can make a comparison, the top photograph is when the Americans were stationed in the camp. As you will see, all the trailers had been protected by large T-walls. The bottom photo is the present condition in Camp Liberty, without any protection whatsoever.

Also, when the Americans were stationed there, there was no such high density of population. At the same time, they had 17,500 T-walls to protect them. After the residents were relocated from Ashraf to Camp Liberty, all of the T-walls were removed from the camp by the Iraqis.

After two years of intensive efforts, the Iraqi government has only allowed about 700 T-walls to be installed in the camp so far. Only yesterday a bullet was fired at the camp, and because there was no protection, it hit one of the trailer walls and then went through the ceiling. One resident's head was injured. The lack of security in Camp Liberty and the immediate and serious threat that the residents are facing are alarming.

Unfortunately, Iraq does not even allow the residents, at their own expense, to get bunkers or to bring their own protective equipment, including protective vests and helmets that they have in Ashraf. The reality is that the residents are vulnerable to missile attacks.

Also, as you know, the security situation in Iraq has deteriorated in recent months. Recently we received information from inside Iran that the Iranian regime and the government of Maliki intend to attack Liberty and then claim that the opposition forces or rogue groups attacked the camp. Also, as you know, some of the conflicts between the opposition and the Iraqi forces are only a few kilometres away from Camp Liberty.

In terms of living conditions, Camp Liberty lacks the internationally recognized standards. That's despite the fact that over the past two years the residents have been working hard to improve the conditions in Liberty. Because of the restrictions imposed by the Iraqi government, they still do not have the basic needs of human life. For example, the grounds are all covered by gravel. There are no concrete buildings in the camp. The residents do not have the freedom of movement. As I said, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has described the camp as being a prison.

It's also very important to note that the residents do not have free access to medical treatment. As a result, 20 people have been killed.

• (1320)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Camp Liberty was initially a kind of a temporary stop for residents of Camp Ashraf before the relocation, but with only 10% of residents, they were being resettled outside of Iraq in the span of two and a half years. The threat that Iran has made to other countries is to not accept the residents.

What action do you feel should be taken to advance the relocation process of Camp Ashraf residents?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi(Interpretation): You correctly said that the mullah regime does not want the residents of Camp Liberty to be relocated from Iraq to other countries. In this regard, Maliki's government is a puppet of the Iranian regime, the religious dictatorship ruling Iran. Therefore, they are really at risk because of the order given by the Iranian regime to the Maliki government.

I believe that the international community, and you in Canada, as a legitimate and respectable country, can be more active and play a bigger role in accepting a group of these people in Canada as refugees. Also, an important issue is other countries, such as Albania which is willing to take more people than the 240 they have already taken, being encouraged and helped to facilitate their taking more people.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Marston, please.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): I'm pleased to address President Rajavi this morning.

Due to the fact that we have a television audience for this committee, a couple of points should be made.

Madam President is testifying today from Paris in exile.

The other thing is—and I'll ask you a direct question so that you can answer it—how long was Camp Ashraf in existence before the transition camp of Liberty was put in place?

• (1325)

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Thank you very much for this clarifying question.

Camp Ashraf was in existence for almost 26 years. As you know, this was a barren land when the residents moved there. They built that into a modern city with their own hands. Based on Iraqi laws, they turned this barren land into a prosperous place and they had the right to stay there.

Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent to build that city. Now all the properties of the residents, both movable and immovable, are still there. Despite commitment by the UNAMI, the UN, the United States, and the Iraqi government that the residents and their representatives could sell this property in order to finance their relocation to outside Iran, they were not allowed to.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I was trying to start a kind of line of questioning here, and it got moved just a little bit.

Last year—or I guess it's longer than that now; time does fly—we had testimony at this committee regarding the concerns about the safety of the people being moved from Ashraf to Liberty. You've described very well how Ashraf had developed into a reasonably safe community, but even then, it was under attack from time to time.

Our understanding at the time was that Camp Liberty would be a place where the UNHCR could do interviews. If I understood your testimony today, you said that those were all completed. Am I correct in that?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Yes, this is absolutely correct. UNHCR has finished all the interviews.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Again, for our televised audience, the interviews were to allow people from other countries to view these people in the camps for potential transfers to their countries.

Clearly, from your testimony today, that has only happened in a very, very modest way. You've stressed that you believe Iran has been involved by trying to persuade people not to take them. Do you see any other limitations that might have caused the lack of the transfers of the people to other countries? Is it that the receiving countries are reluctant to take them for other reasons? Would you expand on that, please?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): The Iranian regime, both as you said and its media has said publicly, doesn't want to exert pressure on the European government not to accept that. Let me give you the background very quickly.

Back in September 2011 the UNHCR announced that all residents of Ashraf are asylum seekers and enjoy international protection, but Iraq did not allow them to have the interview for several months. It took six months before they could do the interview. As you said, they told the residents this was a temporary location and they would immediately be relocated. Even they said that this would be a revolving door, that people would go from Ashraf to Liberty outside Iraq.

They said that when 400 people went from Ashraf to Liberty, by the time they were relocated outside Iraq, then the next group could go, but as you know, after two years, only 10% have gone.

Albania has taken 240. Over 90 people have gone to Germany, and a few have gone to other European countries.

I think the UNHCR could have expedited the process by announcing right from the beginning that all these people were refugees. On the other hand, the Iranian regime is actively preventing that.

The regime's objective is really to kill these people in liberty.

•(1330)

Mr. Wayne Marston: I'm going to barge in—

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): To answer your question, another reason is the policy of appeasement in some of the European countries prevented them from taking these refugees.

Mr. Wayne Marston: If I could interrupt you for a second; I am sorry to do this, but I am almost out of time and I have a question that I think is important.

Do you have any direct evidence of direct Iranian physical force intervention at Ashraf or Liberty?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Yes. We have clear information with documents that show that people from the Iranian regime have been involved. I can provide you with some of these documents. Some of the Iranian regime officials have also acknowledged that.

Many of the orders to attack Liberty or put pressure on the residents, both in Ashraf and in Liberty, come from the Iranian embassy in Baghdad.

The Iraqi government has also announced that they are under pressure from the Iranian regime and this is what Iran demands from them. We know that people from the Quds Force are now very close to Camp Liberty.

As you know, Tahar Boumedra, who was formally in charge of Camp Ashraf, has publicly said that many of the decisions about the pressure on Ashraf and Liberty is taken in the Iranian embassy in Baghdad.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we go to our next questioner, Ms. Rajavi, we would be very grateful if you could ask one of your assistants to send the documents to which you referred to our clerk, who will try to contact your office to get the relevant documentation.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi: Yes, of course. Okay.

The Chair: Good. Okay.

We go now to our next questioner, Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you, Ms. Rajavi, for being with us today and providing some very critical testimony regarding your people who have had to live through horrendous conditions. Many have not survived.

I want to go on with the kind of questioning my colleague was just making with regard to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We have heard allegations that one of the reasons the processing is slow is that the groups of people of the PMOI are too large to move easily. In other words, they don't want to break down the family units and send them to different countries. Is there any truth to that?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): This is absolutely false. There is absolutely no truth in it.

Just to give you a report, last week three people went to Spain. A couple of weeks ago, one person went to Norway. Some of the

European countries have taken one, two, or three people. The residents have all accepted any offers that they have received.

Therefore, this is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you.

You mentioned on a couple of occasions here today, and Colonel Wesley Martin, who's been before this committee a number of times, has mentioned it as well, about the relationship between Iran and Iraq.

I think many people who are viewing our proceedings may not know the history. There has obviously been a lot of bloodshed in the past between Iraq and Iran, and your people came to Camp Liberty. Now there seems to be a collaboration.

Can you explain how this has transpired?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Yes.

Since the protection of Camp Ashraf, which from 2002 to 2009 was done by the American forces, was handed over to the Iraqi forces, the Iranian regime started its conspiracy in coordination with the Maliki government. As you know, Nouri al-Maliki owes his prime ministership to Khomeini and the religious dictatorship in Iran. In return, he promised the mullahs in Tehran that he would pursue the policies asked by the Iranian regime, particularly with regard to the people in Ashraf. For example, now the Iranian regime has influence over all security forces in Iraq. On one occasion they published the names and particulars of 32,000 Iraqis who are on the monthly payroll of the Iranian regime, the Quds Force.

For example, it has been over two weeks since the last election in Iraq, and the Iranian regime officials continue to intervene through the Quds Force in Iraq in order to have the governments that they want in Iraq.

In reality, it has been said that the true ruler of Iraq is Qassem Suleimani, commander in chief of the Quds Force. Even the American officials have acknowledged that 70% of the explosions in Iraq have been carried out by groups affiliated with the Quds Force. The undeniable reality is that the current government in Iraq is under the complete influence of the Iranian regime.

For the religious dictatorship, the real threat is through the Iranian resistance and the organized resistance who they want to.... They believe that if they can eliminate them, destroy their opposition in Camp Liberty or Camp Ashraf, then they can guarantee their survival in power. Therefore, all of their efforts are against these people, first in Ashraf and now in Liberty.

I must say that now even the Iranian regime is very much involved through the Quds Force in the internal conflicts in Iraq, and the Quds Force is playing a commanding role.

There is much information that I can provide to your committee later on. All of this can be sent to the committee.

I think the world knows that Maliki is now pursuing the policy under orders that he gets from the supreme leader in Iran, and the first demand is to destroy, torture, execute, and eliminate its opponents in Camp Liberty. As you know, one-third of the residents in Liberty have already been imprisoned in Iran as political prisoners and suffered torture. There are 1,000 witnesses to what has been happening in the Iranian jails.

•(1335)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Marston): Thank you, Mr. Sweet.

We'll go now to Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to express our appreciation to Mrs. Rajavi for her testimony before us today, in particular for addressing three aspects of the situation in Liberty: the security situation, the living conditions, and the manner of the resettlement of the residents outside Iraq. I say that because these have been subjects that have been the continuing concern of our own foreign affairs subcommittee enquiring into Camp Liberty. More recently they were the subject of testimony by both Colonel Wesley Martin and Jared Genser.

In 2012, Canada and the United States, following the European Union's example, removed the MeK from the list of terrorist entities.

My first question for you is, has the delisting of the MeK aided the residents of Camp Liberty?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): As you said, the United States.... First, the court ruled in favour of the MeK, saying that these allegations are without basis. Then they removed the MeK from the list. Of course, the Iranian regime didn't like it and their lobby has been very active in the United States trying to prevent any positive impact of this move of delisting.

Last month, Secretary Kerry, in one of the hearings of the foreign affairs committee in the House of Representatives, announced that they are now ready to take a number of refugees, but they have not yet taken anyone. I must say that a lot of the negative consequences of that false listing still remain.

•(1340)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: That brings me then to a related question. You did bring up the issue of Canada, for example, accepting a group of refugees from Camp Liberty for resettlement here.

If residents of Camp Liberty were to leave, would any of the residents be likely to pose a security risk to the country in which they would be resettled?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): I think the record is very clear, just to let you know that when American agencies were in Iraq, almost 16 different agencies and departments screened and interviewed every single one of the residents and declared at the end that there was not one single bit of evidence against any of the residents to show that they had violated any law, or could be a threat to any country.

As you know, members or sympathizers of this movement have been in various countries for many years, and I can give you assurance that they have never been a problem, let alone a security

problem, for any countries, and they will continue not to be a problem.

One of the principles of our movement is to fully respect the rule of law in any given country where we are present.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Again, I have a related question.

The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran has said that its political goal is to use peaceful means to transform Iran into a democratic secular state.

What means would you have at your disposal as an organization to seek to accomplish this objective?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): We have an organized movement that is very important, with deep roots, profound roots, in Iranian society particularly among women and youth. We have a very strong network inside the country and a political alternative to the current regime, a Parliament in exile with over 530 members, of which 52 are women, with millions of supporters inside the country.

Many of these demonstrations and protests in Iran have been organized by our network. In the beginning we had the opportunity to openly operate, and at first, just after the revolution, there were 500,000 people taking part in the demonstrations. Even now we have our networks in all strata of Iranian society organizing the protest against the regime.

Our network is also very active in providing intelligence from inside Iran. For example, it was our movement that revealed all the secret nuclear sites of the Iranian regime, and as you know, our network also played a great role in the uprising in 2009. That's why the regime resorted to widespread arrests. Many of our supporters were arrested and executed, and a large number of them are still in prison.

What I want to say, in short, is were it not for the policy of appeasement and the help that the region gets, and had it not been for obstacles such as the terrorism tag and other pressure that is now being exerted on the residents in Camp Liberty, I'm confident that the people of Iran and the resistance would have been able to bring about democratic change in Iran.

As a last point, the Simay Azadi, the national television of Iran, is broadcast into Iran 24 hours a day, which is very much welcomed, and its viewership is much larger. That's why the Iranian regime tried to jam it and collect dishes in order to prevent people from watching our satellite television.

I'm sorry for taking so long.

•(1345)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Marston): Thank you, Mr. Cotler.

We'll go to Mr. Sweet again, for the government.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Rajavi, we've heard chilling testimony here in the past regarding the exportation of terror from this regime in Iran. Has your life been threatened in Paris?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Yes. As far as the Iranian regime, the military regime, is concerned, their efforts have always been to assassinate members of this movement, in Paris or in other places. One of the officials very recently announced that not even a single member of the movement should remain on the face of the earth. Of course, part of that is just a threat to frighten people into not opposing the regime, but naturally, all well-known figures of the movement have been at risk. For example, our representative in Italy, Hossein Naqdi, was some years ago assassinated in Italy. Dr. Kazem Rajavi, our representative in Geneva, was assassinated there. There have been a number of attempts against me that were neutralized by the security services, and fortunately, they could not carry out their plan.

Mr. David Sweet: When Wesley Martin was here, he mentioned his fear of imminent attacks against Camp Liberty.

Have there been recent attacks in the last few weeks at Camp Liberty?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): As I said, there was one incident last night, only one fire at the camp. The bullets went through the wall, the ceiling, and one person was injured in the head. It could have led to his death, but fortunately it didn't.

We do have some information about the possible attack. It seems that in the past couple of weeks Maliki's government is very much engaged in trying to rig the election in their favour and they do not want to get engaged in some other activities, but the concern is real. After the announcement of the result of the election, we are expecting, unfortunately, that there will be more attacks. For this reason, residents almost at all times are on alert. They spend a lot of their time in the few bunkers that they have.

Mr. David Sweet: That very conveniently leads me to the next question. Colonel Wesley also mentioned the blocking of the construction of the T-walls and the bunkers. How important are they for your members for safety?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): As I showed you in the photograph, in the present situation, with the possibility of missile attacks, they are really important, because these trailers have no protection whatsoever. Any kind of missile attack will turn into shrapnel from trailers and bring more casualties among the residents. Had it not been for the few bunkers they had in the past missile attacks, more people would have been killed and more injured. If we could increase the number of T-walls and bunkers, there would definitely be, even in the case of another attack, fewer casualties. They have a really significant role. Thank you.

•(1350)

Mr. David Sweet: Ms. Rajavi, this year you've talked about a medical blockade. Colonel Martin mentioned the fact that at times they wouldn't even allow you to remove the garbage from the site so that you could have sanitary living conditions.

Has there been any international personnel able to visit Camp Liberty in the last couple of months, this year, in 2014?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Unfortunately, the Iraqi government does not allow independent international personalities to go there.

In January 2013, two legal representatives of the residents from the United States went to Iraq to visit them. Even the United States embassy and UNAMI were trying to help them. They went to the gate of Liberty, but even though they were the lawyers and the legal representatives of the residents, they were not allowed into the camp to meet their residents.

They are not allowing anyone to go into the camp. There have been delegations from the United States wanting to visit, but they did not allow them. I know there are delegations from the European Parliament and the British Parliament that have asked to be allowed to go to Baghdad and visit the camp, but so far they have been refused.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Marston): Thank you, Mr. Sweet.

We'll go now to the final round of questioning, to Mr. Benskin of the official opposition.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for your words of insight.

With what you've been telling us about in terms of the collusion, for lack of a better way of putting it, between the Iranian government and the Iraqi government, what do you believe is the deterrent? This will seem like a cold question, but what is the deterrent at this point that has stopped an all-out assault on Camp Ashraf as far as Iran's seeming determination is concerned to eliminate the residents of Camp Ashraf?

What do you feel has been the deterrent to date?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): That is a very good question.

I think the main reason is the international campaign that has been waged to expose the crimes committed against the people, and I must say your own role in having all these testimonies are exerting pressure on the Government of Iraq. The Government of Iraq wants to show that it's part of the family of nations, that it's a democratic country. That's what they want to portray. Therefore, they can be influenced by international pressure. Through this international campaign and concern, we have managed to prevent so far, as you said, a comprehensive assault by the Iraqi forces through the Iranian regime by making the price very high for the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government is trying to portray that it doesn't want these attacks to take place but there are other rogue groups that are doing it.

I must also say that the presence of UNHCR and the UN, although they have not fully fulfilled their obligations, is nevertheless a deterrent. For example, now UN observers are visiting the camp on a daily basis or every other day. Of course, the residents were promised that they would be there 24/7. This is one of the breaches by the UN, not being present on a 24-hour basis, but still, their daily visits are important. That's why I said that a 24/7 presence of UN observers could be a very preventive measure and a deterrent to attacks on Camp Liberty. This is something we can demand from the United Nations and try to encourage them to do. If you look, they carry out their attacks at a time when the observers are not present in the camp.

•(1355)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

To just follow up on a remark that you made in regard to the finalization of the Iraqi elections, you suggested that one of the reasons the Iraqi government has pulled back a bit in working with the Iranian government is their focus on the Iraqi elections.

Is there a fear or concern on your part that after the election process has been concluded in Iraq, the types of attacks that were happening before will escalate again in Camp Liberty?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): Yes, we are concerned. Absolutely, we are concerned. Based on information, we are expecting that there will be more attacks.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: How best do you feel that Canada and the international community can aid the work in preventing an escalation in attacks?

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi (Interpretation): That is an excellent question.

I would like to repeat that I think the most important first step is an international investigation into the crimes that have already been committed, in particular into the massacre of September 1, 2013, because it draws attention to this issue. I really urge you to also call upon the Canadian government to initiate such an investigation on the international scene. Also, I think it's very important that, through

the United Nations, efforts be made to set up a commission to bring to justice those who perpetrated these crimes. These are all preventive measures. They could be very effective in preventing further attacks. As I said, had there been a really comprehensive investigation into previous attacks, I'm confident that the following massacres would not have occurred.

Your committee could also play a leading role in promoting this idea and calling on the Canadian government to urge the UN to also take responsibility for the protection of the residents so long as they are in Iraq and people who are relocated outside Iraq, if necessary, and to have a unit of blue helmets there to provide them protection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Wayne Marston): Thank you, Mr. Benskin. That worked out to 10 seconds over.

This concludes the question portion of our meeting.

President Rajavi, I want to thank you for the insight you've offered today. With the previous testimony we had, that will certainly help us balance out and understand the issues somewhat better.

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, we're adjourned.

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