

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

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**EVIDENCE** 

Thursday, December 6, 2012

Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

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

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**(1305)** 

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Okay, everybody, I'm going to gavel us into session.

[Translation]

Welcome to the 61st hearing of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on this Thursday, December 6, 2012. [English]

Today's meeting is televised. Those of you watching in TV land, do not adjust your sets; the fact that we're all in black and white is purely coincidental.

We have as our witness today, Mario Silva, a long-time friend and former member of this committee.

Mario, I'm delighted to see you here. It is always a pleasure.

I want to mention to committee members that sometimes we allow our time to run over. Today, that would perhaps be inappropriate, given that this is December 6, a day of commemoration for the women who were killed on this day 23 years ago. In memoriam, a number of Standing Order 31 statements will be made. I'm going to be a little more persnickety about the time of your questions than I normally would be, to make sure we can get out of here on time.

Mario, I'd like to turn the floor over to you to begin your testimony.

Mr. Mario Silva (Incoming Chair, Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, members of the committee, for allowing me to appear today.

I would like to brief you on the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, otherwise known as the ITF.

I appear before you in my capacity as incoming chair of the ITF, a role I will assume in March 2013. I am joined today by Mr. Colin Boyd, director for multiculturalism policy at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, who is Canada's head of delegation to the ITF. [*Translation*]

In brief, the ITF was initiated by Swedish Prime minister Göran Persson in 1998, with the purpose of placing political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research both nationally and internationally.

Today, the ITF has expanded from its three founding members, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, to 31 countries, with Canada becoming the 27th member.

[English]

Canada's pursuit of membership began in 2007, at the direction of the Prime Minister and Minister Jason Kenney. As Minister Kenney noted in Oslo, in 2009, during the meeting at which Canada became a full ITF member:

...this important body provides Canada with an opportunity to work internationally to combat racism and anti-Semitism. This Government believes it is critically important to be engaged in efforts to teach future generations the lessons of the Holocaust and help prevent future acts of genocide.

The ITF is unique in that it consists of a mix of government diplomatic representatives and non-governmental Holocaust experts, academics, museum professionals, educators, and researchers. It is governed by the principles expressed in the founding document, the Stockholm declaration, which emphasizes the importance of upholding the "terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it", and of preserving the memory of the Holocaust as "touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for good and evil".

The ITF is the only intergovernmental body devoted exclusively to the memory of the Holocaust. Since the Stockholm declaration, international organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have made Holocaust remembrance a fundamental part of their mission.

[Translation]

In November 2005, the United Nations declared January 27th—the date in 1945 when Russian forces liberated Auschwitz—as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

As ITF Chair, Canada will have an opportunity to lead international efforts to teach future generations the lessons of the Holocaust, combat anti-semitism, help prevent future acts of genocide, and showcase domestic initiatives.

Canada is already stepping up to its commitment as a member of the ITF.

A strong Canadian delegation participates in all ITF meetings and contributes to discussions in all working groups.

# [English]

Over the past 10 years, the ITF has undertaken significant efforts with non-governmental organizations to provide training for both teachers and teacher trainers, including guidelines on teaching the Holocaust in relation to other genocides; to institute best practices in Holocaust commemoration and approaches to Holocaust remembrance days in several countries; and to foster new research through seminars and academic conferences.

Today, the ITF is pursuing a multi-year work plan, with priorities in the following areas: identification and memorialization of killing sites in eastern Europe that lie outside of major death camps; undertaking research into best practices in educational techniques, including measuring effectiveness; and assessing the accessibility of Holocaust-era archives across ITF member states.

#### **●** (1310)

## [Translation]

As Chair, I will work to develop new and existing international partnerships, for example working closely with the OSCE, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. I will also continue discussions with countries such as Ukraine, Bulgaria, Turkey and Portugal, all of which have expressed interest in the ITF.

In addition, through the ITF Standing Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust denial, I will encourage support for the Ottawa Protocol, which, as you know, was developed in 2010 when Canada hosted the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism.

#### [English]

During 2013 I will host several meetings, including the handover ceremony at the Canadian embassy in Berlin in March, the ITF working group meetings in Berlin in June, and the ITF plenary meeting in Toronto from October 6 to 10. To assist me in developing and implementing domestic initiatives, the government has established a national advisory council which I co-chair with Senator Linda Frum. The advisory council includes experts from across Canada, including academics, museum directors, CEOs, and leaders from within the Jewish community. We also have representation from the Polish and Ukrainian communities.

#### [Translation]

Nationally, we want to reach out to all Canadians and use this opportunity to raise awareness and increase understanding of the Holocaust.

Internationally, we want to demonstrate Canada's commitment to Holocaust education, remembrance and research. Opportunities are being explored to showcase the work being carried out in the realm of education. Without a doubt, our schools are powerful agents in the education of youth regarding the Holocaust and the dangers of genocide and mass murder generally.

In addition, Canada is fortunate to have a large number of nongovernment organizations actively involved in the field of Holocaust education and awareness.

# [English]

They work closely with educators at home and abroad to ensure that the Holocaust is integrated into the curricula in a way that resonates with students of all ages and backgrounds. For that I would like to highlight today the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre of Toronto, the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre in Winnipeg, and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. Each of these centres offers in-class programs, field trips, and provides teacher training and resources. The NGO community has done a tremendous job reaching Canadians. However, support is needed for ongoing NGO efforts to record and preserve Holocaust survivor testimony as an essential means of engaging audiences as we move towards a post-survivor environment. The advisory council and other community stakeholders have recommended that the Government of Canada work with the centres to preserve Holocaust survivors' testimony.

### [Translation]

This is seen as a significant project, given Canada's large survivor population, and one that will serve as an essential means of education as we move toward a post-survivor environment.

The overarching Government of Canada goals in preservation of survivor recordings, mainly to protect holdings in danger of deterioration, is to improve their accessibility to the public through digital technology, and to facilitate their use in educational settings as a powerful outreach tool. Living witnesses, who have been able to transmit their personal stories and memories, are an integral part of Holocaust education.

#### **•** (1315)

#### [English]

Youth are another vital component of Holocaust education that requires special attention. Canada will work with the Yad Vashem in Israel, which is leading an international poster design competition in collaboration with post-secondary colleges of art and design from around the world. During Canada's chair year, in acknowledgement of the vital contribution teachers make in the area of Holocaust education, we will partner with the Canadian council of ministers of education to recognize a teacher for best practice in Holocaust education.

With respect to remembrance, significant work has already been accomplished. Under the auspices of Minister John Baird, progress is being made toward establishing a national Holocaust monument here in Ottawa. Through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's community historical recognition program, over \$2.5 million in funding has been provided to projects that commemorate Jewish Canadian experience under Canada's restrictive immigration policies during World War II.

For example, during 2013 a travelling exhibit created by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre will bring attention to the internment of 2,000 Jewish refugees as enemy aliens in camps in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick during World War II. Another travelling exhibit will focus on the story of the MS *St. Louis*.

#### [Translation]

Amid the dark history of the Holocaust, however, there remain amazing examples of self-sacrifice for others, and of humanity's ability to stand up for moral values. It is in this light that Canada Post will release a stamp on January 17, 2013 to highlight Raoul Wallenberg's courage. Wallenberg, a Swedish architect and diplomat, helped save the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Second World War—he is the first honorary Canadian citizen. A travelling exhibit from Sweden that highlights Wallenberg's life and courage is currently on display at the Canadian War Museum.

#### [English]

As I mentioned earlier, a third area of focus for the ITF is research, to shed further light on the Holocaust and its driving force, with a view to preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

During my chair year, new research will be supported through an international academic conference that will take place on October 6 and 7 at the University of Toronto. It will be open to the public. The conference theme is "New Scholars, New Research on the Holocaust". It will target young scholars both in Canada and around the world.

A steering committee of senior academics, co-chaired by Dr. Michael Marrus and Dr. Doris Bergen, will organize the conference. In addition, to assist scholars, Library and Archives Canada, which houses a large collection of Holocaust-related documents, will develop a research guide with details on their records and how they can be accessed.

I have reached the end of my remarks, but before I pass the floor to you for questions, I would like to issue an invitation to the committee to attend a formal ceremony in Berlin on March 5, 2013, when the ITF chairmanship will be passed from Belgium to Canada.

# [Translation]

Your attendance will further signal the commitment—from all political parties in Canada—to ensuring that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon their consequences. When we look around today, as long as there is racism, anti-semitism, and genocide in the world, then clearly the history of the Holocaust remains relevant and real.

#### [English]

I would be happy to address any questions you may have and to discuss with the committee opportunities for your involvement in activities during the Canadian chairmanship year.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Silva.

What we will do now is turn to Mr. Sweet. We can get away with six-minute interventions, but if it looks as though we're running short, I will cut later ones down to five, and I will try to do it in a way that is fair to all the parties.

Why don't we start with Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—West-dale, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to echo your words about the great, positive, and substantive contribution Mr. Silva made to this committee in the past. Although we have a great makeup of the committee right now, certainly we miss his input and his hard work.

I had the honour to share the platform with Mr. Silva a couple of weeks ago. We were honoured to receive the humanitarian award from the Hamilton Jewish federation. I think he earned it well—much more than I did—for his many, many years of great work to fight anti-Semitism and to support the remembrance of the Holocaust.

I can't say enough about how thrilled I am that not only are we getting the chair in 2013, but that it is former MP Mario Silva who's going to be in that chair.

In his opening remarks, he mentioned some past Canadian acts. Unfortunately, there's the *St. Louis* incident, and the internment of Jews during the Second World War. These are stains on our past. We need to make sure that we do everything we can to do quite the opposite now, and to make sure that people don't forget the Holocaust. Of course, just as important is that we stop the spread of anti-Semitism, which we saw through testimony when we worked together on the Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism.

I know that was a long interlude, but I just wanted to express in advance my great appreciation for Mr. Silva's chairmanship. I know he'll do good work. That's not to put an extra burden upon him; I'm just very confident in that regard and I'm very happy.

Mr. Silva, there are 31 countries now that are part of the ITF. What efforts are being made in outreach to add to those numbers?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Sweet, thank you very much for your kind words. It was an honour to share the podium with you. You're certainly a worthy recipient of the award.

Part of the institutional building that will take place during my chairmanship is to look at engaging other countries. Specifically, I was tasked by the Government of Canada to look at having Ukraine join as a member country. At the moment, Ukraine is not a member of the ITF. As you know, there were about 1.5 million who were killed in the Shoah in Ukraine. It's a very large player in terms of their history of the Holocaust and the importance of engaging the country.

At the moment, the ITF does have program funding provided to different countries, including non-member countries. Ukraine has already benefited—at least, the NGO community has benefited—from some of the funding from the ITF.

There are other countries that have shown an interest as well: Bulgaria, Albania, and Liechtenstein. We also have observer member countries, such as Portugal, Turkey, and Macedonia, that also have shown an interest in maybe advancing to full member status. We hope that during my chairmanship I will engage not just the 31 member countries, but other countries, such as those I listed, to see if they'll have an interest in becoming observers or full members, or at least proceed during my mandate.

To become a full member, there is a process. The 31 member countries in the organization basically work on consensus. There has to be agreement by all member countries.

As I mentioned, Canada joined under the leadership of the Prime Minister and Jason Kenney in 2007. It became an observer member by consensus of the member states. Canada then had to do a baseline study. It had to be a liaison member, which is another stage. Then it became a full member in 2009. The fact that Canada is hosting the chairmanship of the committee in 2013 is a great testament to the work Canada is doing on the international front and also its commitment to the ITF. It is a large undertaking and a large commitment.

We're hoping that during our chairmanship year we'll be able to strengthen the organization. Certainly, our goal is to leave the organization stronger than when we started.

From the different members whom I've spoken with, there's a lot of expectation that Canada will do well. This is a country to which the world looks for leadership on issues, not just in combatting Holocaust denial in countries such as Iran, and not just on issues of anti-Semitism that are creeping up all over the world, even in some member countries in Europe, which is of grave concern. I think there is a role for Canada to play. There's also a role for us to network with other countries to make sure that we do a good job for the organization and to leave the organization stronger than when we began our chairmanship.

**●** (1325)

Mr. David Sweet: Okay.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that uses up your time. **Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Silva.

The Chair: Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome back, Mario. I'll save all my kind words for you until after my six minutes, at the end of the meeting.

For me, this is a very serious topic. When I was 12 years old in New Brunswick, a car with a couple of people having a dispute had gone by my home, and a box full of pictures flew out the window. As a typical 12-year-old, I went over to see what they were. They were pictures that had to have been taken by a guard in one of the prisons. It showed things that I won't get into here, but one was a woman being put into a furnace. For a 12-year-old boy, that left an impression that stayed with me. Two things followed: my belief in human rights, and my sense of the necessity of education.

I have a saying I still use with a lot of young people I talk to: with knowledge comes responsibility. Seeing those pictures that day, I

had a sense of responsibility that a 12-year-old shouldn't have, that somehow society, or the world, had sunk to a frightening place. The story of the *St. Louis* and other stories demonstrate that benign neglect, without direct complicity, can lead to many deaths. Then, on the other side, there are the stories of wonderful people who risked their lives, their families, and everything to fight this. It's a story that must be told.

Relative to getting that story out in Canada, what are you running into? Are you running into any obstructions, or is it going relatively smoothly?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you very much, and thank you for sharing with me those personal stories. This is one committee where all of us have been touched one way or another by an event in our lives that drives us to be involved in issues of human rights.

With respect to the education, you're right that with knowledge comes responsibility. I would add that with power comes responsibility. I think this committee has a very important role to play in education and the fight for human rights.

We have received incredible support from the government for our chairmanship year, and Canada has invested significantly in Holocaust education, numbers, and research. There was \$2.5 million that was given for the Jewish community historical recognition project, and part of the baseline study that Canada did in joining the organization was the national task force headed by B'nai Brith and Professor Alain Goldschlager, who was the chair of the committee. They did important work not just on commemoration but also in imparting knowledge, increasing Canadians' awareness of what took place during that very tragic period of our history.

There are a series of initiatives we're going to be rolling out to commemorate our chairmanship year. That will be forthcoming. That's one of the reasons we have an advisory committee. We've taken this information to the advisory committee to get its input, to make sure it's developed. We've certainly been supported by the department, the government, in our initiatives. It is something that is taken very seriously and with good funding as well.

I don't know if Mr. Boyd—

**•** (1330)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Could I jump in, just for a second?

Mr. Mario Silva: Sure.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** There's an additional point. I don't mean to cut Colin off, but it would play back into that.

Today in our educational facilities, because of the situation between Israel and the Palestinians, there's push-back and there are various responses. For those who are looking at the events of the Holocaust in isolation, there's one perspective. That balancing, how do you deal with that when you're out with people in the community, when you're trying to educate? I'm sure there's some push-back that happens to you there. How is that dealt with?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Well, it's challenging for countries like Canada, because education is at the provincial level, so we are dealing with our provincial counterparts to look at their best practices and their goals with regard to how the Holocaust is being taught.

We have a series of funding formulas as well through the ITF to provide support for different teaching institutions to also help teachers. Also being developed within the ITF framework and through the different committees of experts are different tools on how to best teach some of these issues and deal with some of these issues you've just raised.

In Canada, Mr. Chair, you remember we also had challenges when we co-chaired the committee on anti-Semitism regarding how to bring Canadians from all sides together. I think that's very important.

It's a challenge, but it's not an insurmountable challenge, because all of us who believe in human rights need to also fight against anti-Semitism, xenophobia, hate propaganda, and so forth. We need to work collaboratively, and it is in that spirit I come before you. As I mentioned, I invite all of you to engage in some of the activities during our chairmanship year.

I don't know if Mr. Cotler has anything to add.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** In 15 seconds I'll just say that it was great having you on this committee. I happen to be the vice-chair, so I'm trying to fill your shoes here now.

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you.

You'll do very well, I'm sure.

The Chair: Professor Cotler, go ahead, please.

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

I also want to join in the warm words of welcome. We miss Mario Silva as a member of this committee. I think I'm vice-chair only because he's not here now, so I want to express our appreciation to him for his work for our committee in the past and for his leadership in the ITF now.

I want to put two questions to him, which arise from his remarks, which I found very comprehensive and very helpful.

The first has to do with your reference, Mario, in your brief that amid the dark history of the Holocaust there remain amazing examples of self-sacrifice for others, and of humanity's ability to stand up for moral values. In that regard you mentioned Raoul Wallenberg, Canada's first honorary citizen. I wonder if, in that context, the ITF can perhaps have, as a thematic reference in its commemorative work, reference to the work of rescuers. It's an inspiring type of work and it is particularly inspiring for young people, and Raoul Wallenberg is a particular role model.

As you know, January 17 has been set aside here in Canada as Raoul Wallenberg commemorative day. I wonder if the ITF alone or in concert with others has any plans with respect to the Raoul Wallenberg commemorative day in Canada and with respect to maybe helping to establish Raoul Wallenberg commemorative days in other ITF member countries. That is my first question.

You mentioned that a third area of focus for the ITF is research to shed further light on the Holocaust and its driving forces, with a view to preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

On that very important theme of prevention, I wonder if part of your research might be into the dangerous phenomenon of genocidal anti-Semitism, or even state-sanctioned genocidal anti-Semitism where you have the convergence of the incitement of the most horrific of crimes, namely genocide, embedded in the most enduring of hatreds, anti-Semitism. You know this well; I need not elaborate.

Those are my two questions.

**•** (1335)

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you very much, Professor Cotler.

On the first point, and it's the importance of the Righteous Among the Nations, I should maybe let members of the committee know that I will be moderating a panel tonight at the Canadian War Museum. Professor Cotler will be one of the speakers, along with Irving Abella, Áron Máthé, and Brian Palmer. It will start at 7 o'clock. All of you are welcome to attend.

He is, indeed, one of these great humanitarians who Canada so rightly chose as the first honorary Canadian. This is the 100th anniversary of his birth. In 2013 Canada Post will have a stamp commemorating Raoul Wallenberg.

Is there something else beyond the stamp?

Mr. Colin Boyd (Director, Multiculturalism Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): There will be a public event as well.

Mr. Mario Silva: There are some other public events.

One thing we want to focus on during the plenary session in Toronto is a night dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations. We think this is a great opportunity as well to invite Canada's wonderful, fabulous multicultural communities. Even though it was a very dark period in human history, there were incredible people from various countries who actually risked their lives to save people.

Raoul is one example, but there are many others. Many of you know that I've spoken many times on Sousa Mendes, for example, but there are certainly many, many others. There's the wonderful work the Albanian Muslim community did to hide Jews during that terrible period. There was a BESA exhibit not too long ago at the War Museum.

It's wonderful to engage the various communities, and the different faith communities as well, on the night that we would dedicate to the Righteous Among the Nations.

I totally agree with you that it would be important, but not just during our chairmanship year, that we try to take this on the international level with the ITF, which has a thematic role to play in recognition of the Righteous Among the Nations. We will probably be honouring also some descendants of the Righteous Among the Nations in Canada during that year as well, which is quite fantastic. We're working in collaboration with the Canadian friends of Yad Vashem in that regard.

In relation to research and prevention, I think you're right, in that we can't be an organization that only deals in terms of what happened in the past and not be worried about Holocaust denial or the intent to incite genocide, which is the case you have spoken about so eloquently many times, about Ahmadinejad's or Iran's genocidal intent towards the State of Israel and the Jewish people. This is something on which I believe during my chairmanship year I will have the support of members of Parliament, and certainly the government, to be vocal, to make sure that we are speaking against anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and that we are in fact dealing also with countries that have genocidal intent as well, and be vocal in that regard.

I think that's a very important component for the organization. If we are going to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and to say "never again", although Professor Yehuda Bauer hates that phrase, and if we are going to lead down that road, then we have to be more vocal and speak out when we see either regimes or individuals committing acts of anti-Semitism, incitement to hate, or incitement to genocide.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Thank you. **The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I goofed. It should have been the turn of Mr. Schellenberger, and then Professor Cotler.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** I thought so, Mr. Chairman, but I didn't want to interrupt.

The Chair: You didn't want to look a gift horse in the mouth.

Voices: Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Schellenberger. Then we'll go to Monsieur Jacob. Then we'll go back to Ms. Grewal. We'll straighten things out that way. My apologies to everybody.

Mr. Schellenberger.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** I think Mr. Cotler took my questions.

Voices: Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** They were very good questions, sir, so I have no problem with that.

Welcome, Mr. Silva. We spent quite a few years together on the heritage committee, so it's great to see you again. I understand you're doing a very good job.

I have a number of questions. First, do you believe anti-Semitism continues to exist in Canada? If so, to what extent is anti-Semitism a problem in Canada? In your opinion, has anti-Semitism decreased or increased in Canada over the past decades? In your view, has Canada implemented sufficient measures to address anti-Semitism thus far?

**●** (1340)

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you for the questions, Mr. Schellenberger.

Anti-Semitism is a problem, unfortunately. It's a global phenomenon. It's prevalent in all societies. It's an incredible problem of hate. I want to give you some statistics so you can see how things are moving, at least in Canada.

In 2010, B'nai Brith Canada reported the number of anti-Semitic incidents increased by 11% in Canada, including 479 cases in greater Toronto.

Statistics Canada data show that in 2010 the most common type of religiously motivated hate crimes targeted the Jewish faith, a finding that is consistent with previous years. In 2010, the 204 incidents of hate crimes against the Jewish faith represent nearly six in 10, or 55% of religiously motivated incidents.

We know hate crimes are also one of the most under-reported of all crimes.

To answer your question, both from the report from B'nai Brith and from Statistics Canada, unfortunately the pernicious evil of hatred toward the Jews, anti-Semitism as we call it, is still very prevalent in our society.

A series of things have been initiated. In the previous Parliament, under the leadership of me, Scott Reid and Professor Irwin Cotler, parliamentarians from all over the world came to conferences here in Ottawa. This was an important act from this Parliament to show its commitment in the fight against anti-Semitism both nationally and internationally, as was our domestic inquiry panel we had with the report.

A very important document came out of that, the Ottawa Protocol, which has recommendations for the government. It was signed for the Government of Canada by ministers Jason Kenney and John Baird in 2011, making it an official Government of Canada document.

I am hoping that document, the Ottawa Protocol, which was based on the work that was started by Professor Cotler with the London Declaration, will be something other countries would be signatories to. That would be part of my mandate during Canada's chairmanship, to promote the Ottawa Protocol and the work that was done collaboratively by members from all parties to promote this very important protocol.

We also have to work with the schools. That means working with the provinces on how things are being taught, what format is being used, and how it's being addressed.

I would say our worry is how to combat hate on the Internet. The attacks on the Jewish people via the Internet are ferocious. It is very troublesome to see how they are continually being targeted nationally and internationally. A lot of attention and education, and also legislation is needed to figure out how we can deal with this evil

I'm not sure if you have another statement, Mr. Boyd.

**Mr. Colin Boyd:** Certainly through our multiculturalism program we have supported some initiatives to get tools into schools. One of the notable initiatives of Mr. Tony Comper, co-founder of Fighting Antisemitism Together, was the development of a tool kit for teachers which I think has been distributed to schools and 800,000 students. That's a significant effort.

We've also supported other types of initiatives undertaken by the international organization, Facing History and Ourselves, based in London, Boston, and Toronto, which has done innovative work around Holocaust education in schools.

(1345)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Have you ever been denied putting any of your particular programs into any schools?

Mr. Colin Boyd: I think the challenge always with a decentralized system of education is that you can develop guidelines and tools. It's ensuring that those are actually used in the classroom. The question came up earlier about what some of the obstacles are. I think the obstacle remains getting the individual teachers engaged in a way that they feel comfortable teaching an extremely complex and difficult issue. Not only is the Holocaust itself a complex and difficult issue to teach, anti-Semitism is a difficult and sometimes separate topic that requires teaching.

The United Kingdom, for example—one of our ITF good partners—recently undertook probably the largest educational research project in this area in the world, through the Institute of Education at the University of London. They spoke with thousands of teachers across the United Kingdom and asked them about their attitudes toward Holocaust education and about some of the obstacles they faced. It's a very illuminating study which the U.K. published on this issue.

Not surprisingly, I think the results would be similar in Canada. Teachers consistently say that the biggest obstacle to Holocaust education is time. You don't have necessarily a lot of time in the curriculum to devote to a large and difficult subject. Sometimes, if you talk to Holocaust educators, as we do—experts with the ITF—they will tell you that in some respects it's just as dangerous to have too little time to devote to the Holocaust as it is to devote no time at all.

This is something that we're seized with. Certainly experts who gather and form, frankly, the backbone of the ITF are seized with how to create meaningful guidelines, not just in Holocaust education but in linking Holocaust education to other genocides. That is what is often relevant for students in the classroom, how we can link the Holocaust with Rwanda, with Darfur, with Cambodia. A lot of innovative work has come out of those meetings of experts which the ITF has facilitated to provide tools for teachers that allow them to reach students in meaningful ways, given constraints around time and complexity.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Jacob, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Thank you Chair.

Mr. Boyd and Mr. Silva, thank you for coming to testify about your experience before the subcommittee this afternoon.

My first question is addressed to both of you. How do ITF's activities contribute to the fight for human rights both in Canada and elsewhere in the world?

Finally, you have raised sensitive subjects for schools, and mentioned obstacles, including lack of time. Are there other major obstacles for raising public awareness of xenophobia, genocides, racism, the Holocaust, of course, or any other action that promotes hatred?

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you for your question, Mr. Jacob.

First of all, as president, my work consists in playing a major role in advancing ITF's work around the themes I mentioned, which are Holocaust education, research and commemoration. In addition, I have an advocacy role to play with other governments and NGOs, and working with them to advance the three different educational themes I mentioned previously.

In terms of education, the fact that our system is provincial creates certain limits. We must therefore enter into partnerships with the provincial government, but also work with various Canadian institutions on certain aspects of Holocaust education programs. Some of our partnerships were created long ago and are important. They can certainly help us implement several activities within our mandate.

The government has already invested a great deal of capital in teaching future generations about the lessons learned from the Holocaust and helping prevent acts of genocide in the future. In our work, we must always remember how important prevention is. The Holocaust is a very important subject, but it is also useful for educating generations and preventing acts of genocide, xenophobia, anti-Semitism across the world and in our country.

This is our organization's goal. We do everything we can to work with ONGs and various governmental partners, both provincial and national, in order to advance these three very important themes.

Our intergovernmental organization's main document also demonstrates our commitment towards Holocaust education and research as well as its remembrance. Each year, we must celebrate Holocaust Remembrance Day and provide researchers, and especially teachers in various areas of education, access to Holocaust-related archives.

Those are ITF's activities as indicated in our foundation document. This is the lens through which we do our work.

**●** (1350)

Mr. Pierre Jacob: I still have a bit of time.

I would like to come back to the obstacles to raising public awareness. You mentioned sensitive subjects and lack of time. Are there other more specific obstacles that stand in the way of raising public awareness of the Holocaust, xenophobia, genocides, racism, etc.?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** There certainly are other obstacles. There is always more to do in raising awareness, which is why education plays such an important role for our organization.

Unfortunately, it is a constant struggle. As I told the subcommittee, anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia still exist, so we have the obligation to continue to fight them. The mandate of the organization will give me, during my 10 years as president, a greater opportunity to do this work not only at the national level, but also internationally.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Thank you.

Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: I will stop here then. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jacob.

Ms. Grewal, you have the floor.

[English]

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Silva, it's a pleasure indeed to see you here. We do appreciate your work. Thank you very much for it. Educating people about the Holocaust is very important, as it helps people to understand and remember the crimes that have been committed against humanity. That's a really very sad chapter. It may also be useful in understanding the ideological underpinnings of many other genocides, as you have mentioned, in Darfur, Cambodia, as well as in Rwanda.

What efforts have been made by Canada so far to promote Holocaust education and remembering in Canada, besides the education in schools? Are there any other ways to educate people? Why are we facing challenges in educating people about the Holocaust?

• (1355)

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you very much for your question.

In terms of the government support, as I mentioned, \$2.5 million was invested for the Jewish community historical recognition project. There were several initiatives, including the work Canada is doing, of course, with the ITF on the issue of education and remembrance and research. Work is also being done with our NGO communities and our partners on this very important work. There's the important national monument on the Holocaust in the national capital which is under way. This was the subject of a private member's bill by my former colleague, and your colleague, Minister Tim Uppal.

In addition, speaking out on issues of both anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial is very important. There was a statement made by the Prime Minister some time back in which he said:

...to honour the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, it is not enough simply to remember. Truly remembering the Holocaust must also be an understanding and an undertaking. It is an understanding that the same threats exist today. It is an undertaking of a solemn responsibility to fight those threats. We see it in the manifestos of organizations which deny the right of Israel as a Jewish state to exist.

If you are talking about Holocaust denial, if you're talking about acts of ongoing genocidal states and state action that is incitement towards genocide, then we also have a responsibility to speak out. That was a statement the Prime Minister made in his address this year during Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, at the Canadian War Museum.

There is ongoing activity taking place. It is extremely important that we be vocal, that we speak out, that we work with partners in different sectors, both nationally and internationally, to fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Holocaust denial.

Colin may have some additional projects to speak about.

**Mr. Colin Boyd:** Perhaps as a final word, Mr. Chair, recognizing the central role of Holocaust survivors and that Holocaust survivors have played, particularly in the Canadian educational system, Canada became the home to some 40,000 Holocaust survivors after the war and we're a nation that has been profoundly shaped by that immigration.

We are, sadly, moving toward a post-survivor environment, so we are working with Holocaust centres in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto to look at ways to preserve and enhance the testimony of Holocaust survivors using the latest technological techniques to ensure that those stories, which are powerful and which reach students in a way that textbooks do not, can be preserved and used moving forward for future generations.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Do I have time?

The Chair: You actually have a minute.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Combatting racism and anti-Semitism is very important to ensuring that all people are able to freely exercise their human rights.

Could you please elaborate on how the activities of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research contribute to the promotion of human rights in Canada and around the world?

Mr. Mario Silva: Very briefly, there is a working definition as well which the organization has on Holocaust denial. Holocaust denial is a form of anti-Semitism and attempts to deny the genocide of the Jewish people, or attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide. It goes on to deal with issues of Holocaust denial, and they include, public denial, or putting in doubt the use of principal mechanisms, justification or trivialization of the Holocaust, and diminishing the Holocaust, Hashoah, including minimizing the scope of the Holocaust. That's one document that is out there.

There is the grants program as well that works with the NGO communities and with partners across different countries, and especially member countries.

There is the importance for commemoration on Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27. This is now done internationally.

There's been other initiatives that the ITF has also undertaken to advance at the international level. In terms of trying to advance the cause of access to archives and to demonstrate countries' commitment, when countries join they have to show a certain commitment to our principal document, which is the Stockholm Declaration, but also to a series of initiatives on education, remembrance, and research.

Finally, one of the great things this committee could also do is to be part of the handover on March 5. I would encourage you, Mr. Chair, to see if you could get the approval of all members of the committee to be there in Berlin on March 5. I think it would be important for this committee, which is so important on the international issue of human rights, to be present.

At the same time, as you are probably aware, Mr. Chair, the Human Rights Council will be meeting in Geneva, which is right next door. It would be a great opportunity for you and the members of your committee to participate and to do other business if they wish to. I think it is a very important, worthwhile event and a milestone in Canadian history. It's the first time that Canada will take over the chairmanship of this international organization that is doing incredible work on Holocaust education, research, and remembrance.

I would take this opportunity once again to ask you, Mr. Chair, to get the support of your members to attend. It would not be the same without having all of you there.

**(1400)** 

**The Chair:** That is duly noted. I imagine that will be something the committee will discuss at a future time. There's a couple of hurdles we would have to cross.

We are right at the end of our available time, but seeing that it is not quite two o'clock, I am going to allow Mr. Sweet to raise one last matter.

Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We had a very successful program through the Dominion Institute, which the government funded, to videotape Second World War veterans to make sure we kept their stories alive.

Something similar to that was alluded to in Mr. Silva's testimony regarding the videotaping of Holocaust survivors.

It's not clear, and we didn't have an opportunity to get specific, but is that program actually going on? Is it funded? Are there NGOs that are accepting charitable donations so that can continue?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Yes, we are going to be working with the three Holocaust centres to preserve those testimonies, probably making them accessible in digital form. These are things we are working on at the moment with the three centres. It certainly would be a major undertaking during our chairmanship year.

I thank you very much for mentioning the veterans, because they were the great liberators of many camps, one of Canada's roles as well. We hope during our chairmanship year to honour our veterans because they certainly were wonderful in terms of the work they did to liberate Europe from Nazism and the terrible hatred.

I don't know if there is anything Colin would like to add.

Mr. Colin Boyd: I think certainly in terms of Holocaust testimony we know that roughly 2,000 testimonies currently exist, but they are in various formats. Sometimes it's VHS. Some of it's deteriorating, so it's a matter of taking what currently exists and bringing it up to the latest technological standards and preserving, indexing, documenting it in a way that would facilitate access by the public.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Chair. The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sweet.

Thank you to both of our witnesses. I actually have a question which I won't ask because of the time constraints. Today, of course, is a day of remembrance and there are activities in the House of Commons that I don't want to keep you from.

Thank you, Mr. Boyd, and thank you, Mr. Silva.

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

The Chair: Your testimony is insightful as always, and we're very glad to have you here today.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.



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