



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

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

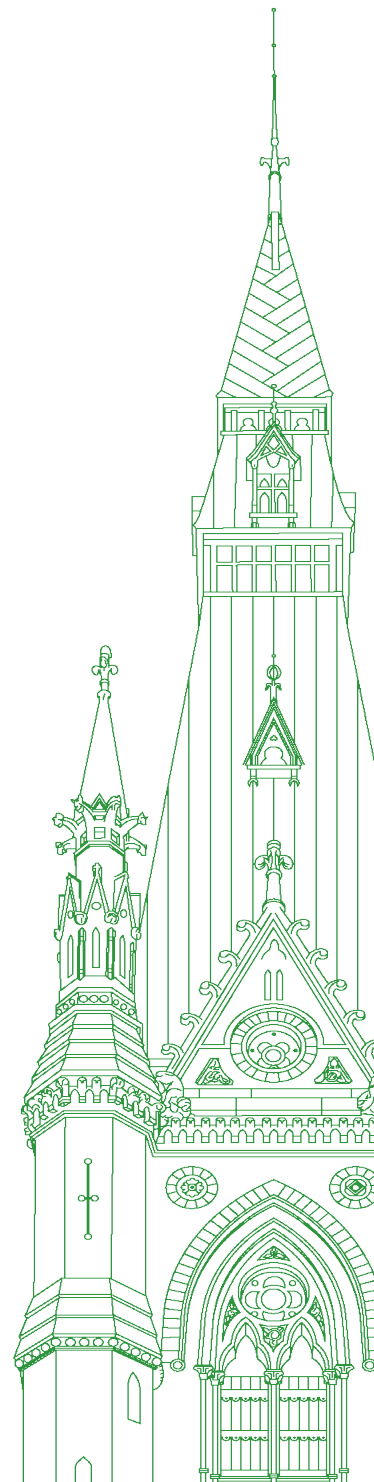
EVIDENCE

NUMBER 001

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

---



Chair: Mr. Marwan Tabbara





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

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

• (1305)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira):** Honourable members of the subcommittee, I see that we have a quorum.

[Translation]

I must inform the members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk can't receive other motions and can't entertain points of order or participate in debate.

[English]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the position of chair.

Mr. Fonseca.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Thank you.

I'd like to put forward a motion to nominate Marwan Tabbara as the chair.

**The Clerk:** Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Marwan Tabbara duly elected chair of the committee.

I would invite Mr. Tabbara to come and take the chair.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair (Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.)):** First of all, thank you for nominating me as chair.

I want to thank all the members of this committee.

I hope we can have a great committee, as we did in the last Parliament. There are members who have been here for 15 years who can provide us with insight on the great work that this committee has done. In the last Parliament, I know that we did some excellent work on raising a lot of issues. Although sometimes we can't do the same type of work that the foreign affairs committee does, it's great for us to really shed some light on places in the world that are oftentimes seeing human rights abuses and don't get the same amount of media attention. This group can really focus and zone in on cer-

tain places and areas with a lot of consensus and really get a lot of great work done.

I want to thank the two past chairs as well, Anita Vandenberg and Michael Levitt, for their hard work.

I want to move on to a couple of things first.

One is that the foreign affairs committee has brought forward David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Programme. He will be visiting Ottawa on March 12, and this visit will be hosted by the Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of International Development. Due to a scheduling conflict of the foreign affairs committee, it is unable to host Mr. Beasley, but it has been asking if this committee would host Mr. Beasley in a meeting here.

I would like to formally request that the Subcommittee on International Human Rights invite Mr. Beasley to appear on March 12, 2020. I think that we can get a great discussion from him. As Canada was the seventh-largest donor to the World Food Programme in 2019, I think it's important that we host Mr. Beasley here. I'm just wondering if committee members would be agreeable to that.

**Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Chair, can I propose a couple of things?

I'm fully in support of Mr. Beasley's being here. What was the date you mentioned? Was it March 12?

**The Chair:** Yes, it's March 12.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Could I also ask, because of our past work...? I know Mr. Fonseca and other members from the Bloc and NDP are not familiar with this, but because of the Herculean work that we've done in the past with regard to the persecuted Rohingya, we have two members of Parliament, Rachael Harder on our side and—I apologize, I can't remember your member who travelled with the—

**The Chair:** I'm not positive, but I think it was Gary Anandasangaree.

**Mr. David Sweet:** They had some significant observations on the ground in Bangladesh. It would be a great update on what's happening with the Rohingya and Bangladesh if they could testify before the committee. It's non-partisan, as well, with both of them here.

Then the next meeting would be our business meeting.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Perhaps I'll just start with a couple of things. I'll go in order, and then we'll decide on them. First, perhaps we can decide on having Mr. Beasley here. Second, we'll decide if we want to have Rachael Harder and Gary Anandasangaree. I think that's a great idea. Third is the election of the vice-chairs. Perhaps we could go in that order.

Do I have agreement on inviting Mr. Beasley here on the 12th?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay, it's unanimous.

By way of a little background for some members, we've discussed the Rohingya conflict that has been going on for a couple of years now. The committee has studied it a bunch of times. I think it would be great to have two members of the party give us an update on what they've seen on the ground. The monsoon season is fast approaching, and this could cause more hardship for some of the individuals there.

Do I have agreement—

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** It's more of a clarification. We're not sure that it's Gary, so should we just ask for the members who travelled to...

**The Chair:** Yes, we'll say “the members who travelled”. It's more accurate.

Do I have agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** I'd like to take requests now for vice-chairs. I think it's two opposition members.

**The Clerk:** I'll preside over the election of the vice-chairs.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by foreign affairs and Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** I nominate David Sweet.

**The Clerk:** Are there any further nominations?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. David Sweet duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk:** Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) and the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

[*English*]

I am now prepared to receive a motion for the second vice-chair.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** I'm going to nominate Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, please.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** I nominate Ms. McPherson for the position of third vice-chair.

Is that possible?

**The Clerk:** We have only two vice-chairs.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I nominate her for the position of second vice-chair.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** We have two motions for the position of second vice-chair, which means—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Is it possible that we could have both of those positions filled and we could have the two? I thought that was still being discussed at PROC.

**The Clerk:** At the moment, the procedure and House affairs committee has decided to report to the House. In order to change the standing order to allow for a third vice-chair, it would have to be ratified by the House. That report at the House level would have to be concurred in.

Our current Standing Orders only allow for a position of second vice-chair.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Okay, then I think that goes to you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'll withdraw my motion. We must wait until we have the opportunity to nominate a third vice-chair.

**The Clerk:** Okay.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's motion is withdrawn.

[*English*]

Are there any other motions for the position of second vice-chair?

[*Translation*]

Ms. McPherson nominated Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe is duly elected second vice-chair.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** If PROC changes it, then we could revisit this. We could reopen it at a later date.

• (1315)

**The Clerk:** Yes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, is now the time to put forward general ideas for studies? Is that what you wanted to go into in terms of this discussion?

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, do you want to put forward some ideas?

There are some papers I received. It's background information, and I'm not sure if you received that. It just tells us some of the places that we studied in the last Parliament. As your colleague David Sweet mentioned, we studied the Rohingya, and it would be a good time to revisit this in terms of some of the colleagues who came. Some other areas that we revisit may be areas where more conflict has broken out and we revisit something. If you have this paper here, it shows some of the places that we haven't had a chance to study in certain areas.

I would be happy to entertain some of the areas of study that you have, and you may want to share them with the committee. That way, other committee members can have a chance to hear that, and then, if they want to propose other areas of study, we can discuss it here or we can discuss it at other meetings as well.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** My understanding is that generally this committee is operated on consensus, so I don't have these as motions because I think it's better to just put them out as ideas, but if we find a substantial degree of consensus, and we can establish at this meeting that we want to start on a few themes, then that way we don't have to spend unnecessary time in committee business discussion.

There are two ideas that I want to put on the table. The first is that there's a lot of growing interest and concern about the human rights situation in India. I don't think we have dealt with issues in the past at the subcommittee around the citizenship law and recent communal violence. Just given the large South Asian diaspora communities here in Canada, there is a lot of interest in that, and there's a particular opportunity for Canadian engagement on that.

At the same time, the criticism is always that, if we talk about human rights in India, why aren't we talking about Pakistan? I wonder if we could establish that as an area of focus on human rights in South Asia. We could look at minority rights and other human rights issues in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well. There are growing concerns about that. We could have a few meetings on each. It would give us an opportunity both to talk about some of the specific issues and specific countries and also to look at whether there are broader regional trends. Again, I think the way Canada is seen through these diaspora connections creates some good opportunities for us to have a voice maybe in a region that we haven't been as engaged with in the past on some of the human rights stuff. That's one idea.

My other idea is that there's a lot of discussion in this committee and elsewhere about the question of genocide and genocide recognition. I think we could do a study here specifically about Canada's mechanisms for genocide recognition and response. Are we equipped to identify early warning signs of genocide? How do we go about recognizing past or present genocides? What are the processes within our government triggered by a declaration? I think that, just by looking at how we identify and respond to genocide at a general level, we could do some really good work. Rather than just looking at specific cases, we could evaluate that as a broader topic.

**The Chair:** Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I think both of those sound great and really interesting. Certainly what we're seeing happening in India, Pakistan and the South Asian area is important to me, so I think that would be very useful.

Another thing I was wondering about was whether it's possible to look at, instead of a region or an area, the topic of gender violence and gender violence in climate crisis and humanitarian crisis, if that's something that would be good for us to have on our plate.

The second one I was going to bring forward is looking at the number of different countries in Latin America that are suffering in their democratic processes. That might be another area we could look at. We could be looking at some of the democratic processes in Latin America as well, looking at Bolivia, Venezuela and some of those areas.

• (1320)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** In danger of piling more on to what actually sounds like really worthwhile studies that my colleagues have put forward—and I like all of them, actually—I have a few ideas that are more one-off kind of studies.

I remember in the last Parliament we had Felix Tshisekedi from the Congo, who was an opposition leader at the time. He came and spoke about the elections there. He has since been elected President of the Congo, so those of you who were here for that committee meeting...he was actually successful and became president.

There is another leader, who also ran for president, who is going to be in Ottawa around April 23 and would like to appear and testify about the situation in the Congo and democracy there. If it's worthwhile, it would be very helpful. I can testify also that I knew him very well when I lived in the Congo. He was a member of my steering committee. It's an area of the world where every form of human rights abuses are happening, so it might be interesting. That would be around April 23.

There are others I put out there. One that we haven't, in my memory, actually talked about, which is not in the headlines but is a huge humanitarian crisis, is Yemen. I don't know if we might have some witnesses and maybe a one-off on Yemen.

In the last Parliament, near the end, we had people coming in on Cameroon. I think the situation there has not gotten any better, and there are a number of people who have approached several of us about some of the things that are happening there. If we wanted to have an update on that, that's another one I would put forward.

That's by no means exhaustive. I think we can prioritize. I also like all the ideas and suggestions that my colleagues came up with.

**The Chair:** I am going to interrupt to make sure I get the first part done here. Like other committees, we have to go through the routine motions. I'm going to read that through. We need to get this done the first day, as it helps us get funding, budgets, and all that.

The first part, under analysts, states:

That the subcommittee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We can invite the analysts now to the table.

Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Following routine motions, I assume this is happening, but just in case. You know what they say, "If you assume, you make an ass of you and me", and I don't want to do that.

For all these ideas that were pushed out, they're recorded, so can we get them and consider them before we go to our first business meeting.

**The Chair:** The analysts will prepare documents with all these ideas. Generally, when we're discussing these ideas, it's fine for right now, but we've done it before in camera. We're in public right now. It's just to inform the committee that later on we can have more discussions on certain things amongst ourselves. That was the practice going forward before.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Yes, that's good. I was going to do that anyway. I don't know if there's a ruling that we have to do that after routine motions. I would move that we go in camera. I have a couple of other issues regarding our meetings going forward that I'd like to discuss.

• (1325)

**The Chair:** Can I have a motion to go in camera right now?

**Mr. David Sweet:** So moved.

**The Chair:** We have unanimous consent to move in camera. We'll suspend for a minute.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

---









Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>