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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1630)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I'd like to call this meeting to order. We apologize for the delay in commencing.

Welcome to meeting number 98 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders. Therefore, members are attending in person in the room as well as remotely via the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and, of course, for the members as well.

Before speaking, please do wait until I recognize you by name. You may speak in the official language of your choice.

Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause, I will remind all of you, is sound feedback, which occurs when an earpiece is worn too close to a microphone.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do our best to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee will proceed to hear from officials with a briefing on the situation in Israel and Gaza.

I'd like to welcome our distinguished witnesses. We're very fortunate to have here before us Mr. Alexandre Lévêque, who of course is the assistant deputy minister for Europe, Arctic, Middle East and Maghreb. We also have with us Mr. Louis-Martin Aumais, director general and deputy legal adviser for the public international law bureau. Lastly, we have Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu, director general and chief security officer, and he is with the security and emergency management office.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks, Mr. Lévêque. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque (Assistant Deputy Minister, Europe, Arctic, Middle East and Maghreb, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you again for the invitation to brief the committee today on events in Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The situation has evolved substantially since my last appearance in December. My remarks today will focus on how the conflict is evolving and on Canada's response.

Before I begin, I would like to briefly address the motion adopted by this committee on February 12, 2024, regarding the production of papers on Canada's military export permits to Israel. The department provided a package on March 13 in response to this motion. We look forward to working with you to ensure the smooth delivery of documents to support the committee in its study.

For Canada, it remains clear that a sustainable ceasefire is necessary to finding a path towards securing lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Of course, such a ceasefire cannot be one-sided. Hamas must lay down its arms and release all hostages.

There is growing international consensus around the urgent need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Canada continues to monitor negotiations led by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar towards this end.

Foreign Affairs Minister Joly recently visited the Middle East, which allowed her to witness first-hand the effects this conflict has had and continues to have on Israelis, on Palestinians and, indeed, on the broader region.

• (1635)

[Translation]

The minister has met with her counterparts and a variety of officials and organizations. She reaffirmed that allegations of sexual violence against women in the Israel-Gaza conflict should be investigated and that the perpetrators should be held accountable. The Minister of International Development, Mr. Hussen, is also very involved, as shown by his visits to Jordan and Egypt, particularly Rafah, to see the impact of Canada's humanitarian aid.

The government continues to emphasize that it supports Israel's right under international law to defend itself against Hamas's terrorist acts. All actors must respect international humanitarian law, which includes allowing the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

[English]

As stated by the Prime Minister last month alongside his counterparts from Australia and New Zealand, Canada is gravely concerned by Israel's planned military offensive on the city of Rafah. This would risk catastrophic consequences for the approximately 1.5 million Palestinians taking refuge in the area. Rafah remains the main entry point for humanitarian aid going into Gaza, and Canada continues to urge the Israeli government not to go down this path.

The need for consistent humanitarian assistance in Gaza has never been greater. It is clear much more is needed to address the urgent humanitarian needs of Palestinians. Canada remains one of the largest contributors of humanitarian and development assistance to vulnerable Palestinians, with contributions of \$100 million in the past year to address the current crisis in Gaza.

[Translation]

Following serious allegations that staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, better known as UNRWA, were involved in Hamas's terrorist attacks against Israel on October 7, 2023, Canada decided to temporarily suspend its funding to UNRWA at the end of January.

In response to the allegations, the UN has put in place several significant, rigorous processes to review the allegations and reinforce zero tolerance for terrorism within the UN, including UNRWA. Canada has reviewed the interim report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services on this issue and looks forward to the final report. Canada also welcomes former minister Colonna's ongoing independent review of UNRWA, as well as UNRWA's immediate actions to strengthen monitoring, accountability and transparency.

UNRWA plays an essential and indispensable role in Gaza, providing humanitarian aid to more than two million people, in addition to its crucial activities that support four million people in the region. That was why Canada decided to lift the temporary suspension of funding to UNRWA.

[English]

We systematically convey to our Israeli partners the necessity of a two-state solution as the only way for Israel to achieve long-term security and recognition in the region. Canada stands ready to keep supporting the Palestinian authority in its revitalization efforts, and to work with its new technocratic government, once formed, towards implementing governance reforms.

I will stop here. We look forward to answering your questions.

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

Before we get into questioning, does everyone want to run until 5:30 with questions, or do we want to set aside 15 minutes at the end from 5:15 to 5:30 for committee business?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, we are fine with spending the last 15 minutes of the meeting on committee business.

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

[English]

We will have questions until 5:15, after which we will go into committee business.

We will start with four-minute questions, and Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

In October, our foreign affairs minister delivered a speech to the Economic Club of Canada that called for a humanitarian truce, as well as the release of hostages, but a few days later Canada abstained from voting on a resolution at the United Nations that called for that humanitarian truce.

How is Canada's lack of a commitment to a coherent foreign policy affecting the outcome, and the ongoing tragedy that's unfolding in Gaza?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: The latest position the government has taken on this goes back to December 12, when the government pronounced itself on promoting and advocating for a ceasefire in the region. We were among the first countries, if not the first country among like-minded, to make that pronouncement. I cannot speak to what other pronouncements the minister might have made before, but the position, since December 12, is very clear. The government has been consistent in calling for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

• (1640)

Mr. Dave Epp: The government has landed on that position now. The IRGC has supported and funded Hamas, which is behind a lot of the sadistic violence and murder of innocent civilians, including many Canadians.

Why has Canada not nailed and identified the IRGC as a terrorist entity, because of the additional evidence now playing out in Gaza?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: The number of tools at the government's disposal to put pressure on Iran, and to make Iran accountable for its actions in the region, is obviously very wide. The state of Iran is already listed as a state sponsor of terrorism. As for decisions that could be made in the future regarding the IRGC, this is a decision the government will make. I'm here to explain what is, and not what the government hasn't done yet.

Mr. Dave Epp: The Prime Minister stated the government is looking for a way to list the IRGC in a responsible manner. Is not listing it not irresponsible? Sorry for using so many double negatives, but he's saying he wants a responsible way to list the IRGC. Why is it not happening?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: It's a policy decision.

I couldn't speak for the Prime Minister on this. We are there to provide options. We provide these options to the government so they can make policy decisions.

Mr. Dave Epp: Allowing them to continue to exist... Your colleagues from Finance have identified that up to \$100 billion of Iranian funds is being snow washed here in Canada through money-laundering schemes. That is funding terrorism, so would that not be enough? Is there not enough evidence to pursue that path?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: A lot of sanctions are in place to help put pressure on Iran. You would be familiar with those.

I forget the exact number, but we have already listed hundreds of IRGC officials, and our sanctions regime is designed precisely to address what you're referring to.

Mr. Dave Epp: How does UNRWA fit in then when members of UNRWA have been identified as part of the Hamas terrorist group? How does UNRWA fit in with the IRGC?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: UNRWA is a UN organization guided by UN rules. It employs 33,000 people—13,000 in Gaza alone. The allegations that were made were initially against 11 or 12 individuals.

We immediately saw UNRWA take measures to suspend these individuals. Ever since that, a number of measures have been taken by UNRWA itself to review its processes and to review its processes for clearing employees.

The UN headquarters, led by the Secretary-General, have put measures in place. We've been briefed on interim reports that the office of control of the UN has written, so we can see that immediate measures were taken. The bad apples, if you will, the negative elements, were fired to allow the organization that is absolutely essential to humanitarian assistance in Gaza to continue to operate.

Mr. Dave Epp: There has been enough evidence—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Epp. We're at 4:40. I apologize.

We next go to Mr. Zuberi.

You have four minutes, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I'd like to thank the witnesses, Mr. Lévesque and his team, for being here.

I would like to touch upon the minister's recent trip to Israel, the West Bank and the region. I took note of a number of tweets and social media posts about some of the accomplishments of the minister's trip. They included two announcements, both related to protecting the rights of women from sexual and gender-based violence.

The first tweet I saw said that Canada was giving \$1 million to support the victims of sexual-based violence on October 7. That tweet was very clear about Hamas being the aggressors.

A second tweet I read said that Canada was giving \$1 million to support Palestinian women who were the victims of sexual and gender-based violence, but it was unclear who the alleged party committing these crimes actually was and where the money was going in each of the two \$1-million tranches.

• (1645)

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Mr. Chair, I can address this. I had the pleasure of accompanying Minister Joly on her trip to the Middle East and I was part of those meetings. I can say that this was actually addressed at quite some length in a round table with women's rights advocates, particularly experts on sexual and gender-based violence, with the First Lady of Israel and then in a follow-up conversation with President Herzog of Israel.

On your first question, allegations have been made. You're right about the atrocities on October 7, which were clearly committed by Hamas. There is a lot of evidence that points towards the sexual crimes that were committed, so the \$1 million that has been set

aside to help Israeli women survivors is support for recovery, counselling, etc., and that is clearly identified.

There have also been allegations made of sexual and/or gender-based violence towards Palestinian women, not with as direct an attribution. The position of the minister on this is that when a woman comes forward and makes such allegations, we should believe the woman, first and foremost, and always investigate.

The money in the second announcement was to support these women, but of course allegations will need to be pursued and investigations will need to be made.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: So we have no idea who committed those crimes of sexual violence. Do we have any idea?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: There's no precision yet.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: That's helpful.

In terms of UNRWA, just to set the record straight, my understanding on the dates is Mr. Hussen announced that we would be pausing future funding to UNRWA on December 6 and more recently in March. But don't take my dates here.

Several weeks ago, if not months, Minister Hussen announced that we would pause future funding to UNRWA because of allegations of 12 employees who were involved in the October 7 attack.

More recently, in March, Minister Hussen unpaused the future installment.

I'm not asking about that specific issue but about the issue of our humanitarian aid to Gaza in this conflict, because I think there's a lack of clarity on that in Canada and for Canadians.

My understanding is we did pause future payments, but that payment was not due until a future date. In reality, to support humanitarian endeavours, we have increased funding and the funding for UNRWA was never cut, although we were going to do so if we did get down to the issue.

Is that correct?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: That's correct.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: So we did increase—

The Chair: Mr. Zuberi, you're over time. It's now four minutes and 30 seconds.

Thank you.

We next go to Madame Normandin.

You have four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Mr. Lévêque, thank you for committing in your opening remarks to providing the committee with the documents it requires. However, I would like to say something. On December 6, the committee requested written responses on Canada's voting process at the United Nations, on export permits, on the International Criminal Court and on the International Court of Justice, but the committee is still waiting for those responses.

My first questions are about Israel's blockade of basic necessities since the start of the conflict. The supplies are coming in through Rafah in a very piecemeal fashion. Despite the famine that ensued, the Department of Foreign Affairs has never expressed the view that what Israel is doing violates international law. I would like to know if that is still the case. What is the department's current position? Does it consider Israel's actions to be in violation of international law?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: In response to your first comment, I will personally commit to providing you with the missing answers to the questions that were asked at the December 6 meeting. I assure you that it will be done as soon as possible.

With regard to humanitarian aid in Gaza, Canada's position is that the current situation, however you describe it, is tragic. The human suffering is unprecedented. Our position is to do absolutely everything we can to facilitate the delivery of essential aid, including by land. We are constantly pressuring the Israeli government to open as many road crossings as possible, which remain the most effective way to get humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. We need to contribute to the airdrops coordinated by Jordan. We will also contribute to the humanitarian sea corridor between Cyprus and the Gaza Strip. We absolutely want to provide support on all of these fronts.

• (1650)

Ms. Christine Normandin: I notice you didn't say yes, meaning it is a violation of international law.

In November, in the wake of the atrocities committed by Hamas, the government called on Israel to exercise restraint. Do you think Israel exercised, or is exercising, restraint?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: It depends on the measure you use and the interpretation you make. What I can tell you is that we see the current violence as taking a devastating humanitarian toll. I repeat, we are applying pressure at every level to urge Israel to exercise as much restraint as possible, from speaking to officials and participating in working groups to reaching out to departments and leaders. We consider all the death and suffering occurring in the current circumstances to be a tragedy. Therefore, more can always be done to encourage that restraint.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

As far as Israel's actions are concerned, has Global Affairs Canada done an assessment and established any red lines that mustn't be crossed?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: I wouldn't describe any of the actions as red lines, per se, other than the fundamental principles we have reiterated, including those you mentioned.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I take it there aren't any red lines vis-à-vis future actions either.

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: Nothing that we've characterized in that way.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to MP MacGregor.

You have four minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Lévêque, I just want to run through the numbers to ensure I have them correct.

Did you say it was seven employees from UNRWA who were implicated in the interim report?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: I believe it was 12.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That's out of a total organization strength of around 30,000?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: It's 33,000 overall, 13,000 in Gaza.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: The leader of the opposition recently referred to UNRWA as a terrorist organization.

Does Global Affairs Canada feel it's reasonable to hold an organization that employs 33,000 people accountable for the actions of 12 of its members?

Does the department share the view that that's the correct terminology to use in this case?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: The department considers UNRWA to be a UN organization or a sub-body that belongs to the UN family. We do not—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Sorry.

Is the department aware of any of our major allies that hold that view, holding the entire UNRWA organization accountable for the actions of 12 of its employees?

Mr. Alexandre Lévêque: Not that I'm aware of. No country has referred to UNRWA as a terrorist organization.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for getting that on the record.

Human Rights Watch has argued that the demise of UNRWA would be catastrophic for Gaza. Does the Government of Canada share that view?

To add some context, how do you place UNRWA in terms of its ability to deliver aid to the people of Gaza?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: We believe that UNRWA is an absolutely essential organization in the current context to be able to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in grave need in Gaza, not just because of the internal networks that they run to deliver humanitarian assistance but also because they are the organization that other humanitarian actors use inside Gaza. The World Food Programme could not deliver its food to Gazans if it wasn't for UNRWA. UNICEF could not reach the children they need to reach if it wasn't for UNRWA. It is really the backbone of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

• (1655)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: To be clear, when you're talking about grave need, we're referring to catastrophic destruction of necessary infrastructure and lack of access to medical supplies, food and basic shelter.

Am I correct in outlining those?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: That would be correct.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

You mentioned in your opening statements about Israel's right to defend itself. I think everyone around this committee understands that right is afforded to any nation-state around the world.

What I want you to help me understand is, in the destruction that's going on in Gaza and the catastrophe that we're all witnessing day by day, that's happening and being inflicted on the Palestinian people who live there, at what point does the Government of Canada's understanding of the right to defend itself transition?

Is Israel still meeting that defined right to defend itself with the destruction that's going on in Gaza right now?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: What I would say is that Israel really is at war right now; it is at war with Hamas. I can tell you having stood three kilometres from the border with Gaza that I could hear gunfire, automatic rifles going off. That's not civilians fighting the IDF, the Israel Defense Forces; that is a terrorist organization. We could hear artillery fire going in. That war really is happening right now. It continues.

The position of the government, and certainly the analysis of the department, is that maximum restraint and consideration for civilian life must be a consideration at all times. We've seen phenomenal destruction and grave human suffering that we have called out. We've said numerous times that it should be reduced, should be brought to.... On both sides, the violence has to stop.

It is very difficult to give to you an exact measure, but the trend and generally what Canadians and what this government have advocated for is a lowering of the temperature, lessening of violence and increased consideration for civilians and human life in Gaza.

The Chair: We'll next go to MP Chong.

You have three minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canada's long-standing, many-decades-long position has been to recognize the State of Israel, with which we've had diplomatic relations for decades. It's also been our long-standing position not to

recognize the state of Palestine. We'll recognize that state if it culminates...as the result of negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people.

Does the Government of Canada believe it's time to change that long-standing position and immediately recognize the state of Palestine?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Mr. Chair, this is obviously a policy decision that will need to be made by the minister and the Prime Minister speaking as representatives of the government.

What I can tell you, from the department's side, is that the position has been, and remains, that the only way forward out of this conflict, ultimately, is having two states living side by side. Recognition of a Palestinian state at some point in the continuum, we believe, should happen. If you look at the Oslo accords, the final stage was supposed to be the recognition of the Palestinian state.

Hon. Michael Chong: Right. Therefore, "at some point in the continuum" presumably excludes the beginning of the continuum.

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: It can be anywhere in the continuum. I think what is important is—

Hon. Michael Chong: Should the process start with the recognition of a Palestinian state?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Not necessarily, but there is a continuum there.

Hon. Michael Chong: Yes.

However, the advice from the department, I assume, is not to begin with the recognition of a Palestinian state but rather to have the two parties sit through the difficult process of negotiations and perhaps, at some point along that continuum—as you call it—potentially recognize a Palestinian state.

Is that the advice, as I understand it?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: The advice of the department is, of course, protected and has to go to the minister, so I cannot disclose it to this committee here.

Hon. Michael Chong: Fair enough.

I have a question related to humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza.

Recently, the Amalthea initiative was announced. Canada isn't part of that initiative to use maritime transport to carry aid from Cyprus to the Gaza Strip.

Why isn't Canada part of this initiative?

• (1700)

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Canada has announced that it will be part of this initiative and will contribute. It is in talks right now with—

Hon. Michael Chong: Why weren't we part of the joint statement?

If we are going to be, at some point, part of the initiative, what assets are we bringing to bear?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Well, that's exactly what is being discussed right now.

In the first instance, it will be supplying actual humanitarian goods to be loaded onto ships leaving from Cyprus. We're in discussion with the key actors—Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, the Israeli government and the Americans—to see how we can best insert ourselves in that supply.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll next go to MP Chatel.

You have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the Global Affairs Canada officials for being with us today.

We all understand that this is a war and that it's difficult. No war is easy, of course, but wars do have rules. One of the rules under the international conventions Canada is a signatory to stipulates that we must always protect civilians, innocent people. As you described so well, the current situation is inhumane. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of innocent people are dying every day in Gaza. That is unacceptable. Regardless of the situation, we all have an obligation to protect civilians.

Part of that means making sure that humanitarian aid is provided. That's what I want to ask you about. The U.S., along with the U.K. and other allies, announced its plans to set up a maritime corridor, but as you pointed out, the UN has said clearly that the best way to deliver humanitarian assistance is by truck. We know that the Netanyahu government is doing things that are blocking the delivery of the aid. Doesn't opening a maritime corridor overshadow the urgent need to push for the aid to be delivered by land?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Thank you.

I wouldn't say the two are mutually exclusive. I can assure you that, in all our discussions with the Israeli government, at every level, we never miss an opportunity to underscore our collective responsibility and the Israeli government's direct responsibility to ensure people's welfare. That means making sure they receive basic services, food and medicine.

The extraordinary needs of Gazans are the reason why we are contributing to the maritime convoy and airdrops. That said, we completely agree that the most efficient, impactful and cost-effective way to deliver the aid is by land, using trucks, and we are stressing that again and again. The Gaza Strip has more than enough entry points. Rafah is currently the most used entry point, but there are at least three or four others. That is an idea we keep pressing with the Government of Israel directly as well as through partners with close ties to the most senior Israeli officials.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I want to make sure that we keep putting pressure on the Israeli government to open those entry points.

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Absolutely.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Chatel, I'm afraid we're over three minutes.

We will now go to Madame Normandin.

You have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I would like the department officials to talk about the export permits for military equipment. We know that, since October 7, permits have been issued for the export of non-lethal equipment only. More recently, we found out that the processing of export permit requests has been put on hold. Has Canada refused any permit requests, and if so, what were the reasons?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Unfortunately, I can't get into the specifics of each permit request, and I'm going to ask my colleague to give you the exact term that explains why.

• (1705)

Mr. Louis-Martin Aumais (Director General and Deputy Legal Advisor, Public International Law Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): The reason is an application for judicial review.

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Thank you.

Yes, an application for judicial review was filed, and I wouldn't want to undermine that process. For that reason, I can't say too much about the specifics of each request. You are right that no permits have been issued since January 8.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. MacGregor.

You have a minute and a half as well.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Lévesque, the President of the United States has publicly referred to the intolerable levels “of extremist settler violence, forced displacement of people and villages, and property destruction” in the West Bank.

Our own Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that she would like to follow the United States' example on sanctions.

Can you please update this committee on whether those sanctions are going ahead? What criteria and methods of investigation is the government using to identify extremist settlers and the violence being perpetrated on Palestinians in the West Bank?

Mr. Alexandre Lévesque: Thank you.

Again, without wanting to pre-empt decisions that the government might take, I can say that sanctions on extremist settlers are under active consideration. It is an option that is being pursued at this time.

As you probably know, our sanctions regime demands that we use open-source information in order to identify which individuals or entities to list under our sanctions regime. It's something that we have pursued in this case.

I should note that a number of extremist settlers have actually been found guilty of such aggressions by the Israeli government itself. At the very least, there is a base of information there that we can use in addition to wider sources that remain open.

Having been in the West Bank just a few days ago, where I was surrounded by those illegal settlements, I would say that there's enough of a body of evidence to be able to link the most extreme members in a relatively easy way.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes our questions.

At this point, I'd like to thank Mr. Lévêque, Monsieur Aumais and Monsieur Beaulieu. We're very grateful for your time, expertise and perspectives.

We will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes and then come back for in camera committee business for approximately 15 minutes.

Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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