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**Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and
International Development**

EVIDENCE

CONTENTS

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[\(1535\)](#)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)):

Good afternoon, colleagues.

[English]

Welcome to meeting 22 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for Tuesday, April 8, 2008.

Before we hear from our witnesses and before I introduce them, we have a little business to attend to. With the Honourable Mr. Wilfert becoming the official critic of defence, we have a few changes, because he was our vice-chair previous to that. So I'm going to open nominations for a vice-chair from the Liberal side.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):

It would give me great pleasure to nominate Bernard Patry for the position of vice-chair, if it's agreeable.

The Chair:

All right.

Are there any other nominations for that position? If not, we'll close nominations and we'll acclaim Mr. Patry our vice-chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Chair: I think it's good that he isn't here. He doesn't have to give us one of his election speeches. That might have changed our minds.

Certainly he is no stranger to that, being the chair of this committee for many years and serving as vice-chair in the past. We certainly welcome him.

Today we will have a briefing on the recent violent reaction of the Burmese regime and then later we will hear from Oxfam, as part of our study on Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

In the first hour we will hear from the Institut québécois des hautes études internationales, Estelle Dricot, professional researcher in the institute's international peace and security program; from Rights and Democracy, Madame Lévesque, regional officer for Asia; and from the Canadian Friends of Burma, Mr. Htoo, the executive director.

We welcome you here today. Some of you have appeared before our committee before. We welcome you back. For others who may be new, we give a special welcome to you. We look forward to your initial comments. Then we will proceed to the round of questioning.

Mr. Htoo, perhaps you could give us your opening comments, please.

Mr. Tin Maung Htoo (Executive Director, Canadian Friends of Burma):

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of Parliament and distinguished guests and observers.

This is a great opportunity for me to share with you what happened in Burma and also the response of the Canadian government to these situations. We all saw what happened in Burma last year in September and the brutalities of the military junta. We still remember the images. The images are still vivid and a reminder to the international community that we have to support the people striking for democracy in Burma.

I think Canada's response to this latest crackdown in September was quite strong. It could be even regarded as the strongest among all nations in terms of its package of measures taken by Canada last year in November. Not only did Canada impose the toughest economic sanctions on the Burmese military junta, but also members of Parliament unanimously supported a motion tabled by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in conferring honorary Canadian citizenship on Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

During the uprising last year in Burma, the support of Canadian citizens was also quite remarkable. In more than a dozen cities across the country, thousands of Canadians came out to the streets and supported monk-led peaceful demonstrations for Burma. Even in the Yukon, 150 people came out in the very cold weather, and the Toronto protests, which drew more than 3,000 people, demonstrated the second-largest gathering in the world after the protest in London, England.

As a representative of an organization working for democracy and human rights in Burma, I'm very delighted to have seen such widespread and tremendous support from Canada and its citizens, government, and Parliament alike. Indeed, I am proud of Canada standing up for its fundamental values of freedom, democracy, and human rights, which have been denied to 56 million people in Burma by its repressive ruler.

While I express my deepest appreciation to the government of Canada for what it has done, especially since September last year, I would also like to request the government take some additional measures to have an impact and make a difference. The first recommendation I would like to make is to set up a task force for the enforcement of the measures imposed last year. Because when we look at the measures, there are a number of measures that are, of course, law right now, but who monitors and who imposes these measures is still a question for us. That's why I strongly ask the government to set up a task force.

One vision that comes to my mind is the government list of individuals to be targeted with these Canadian measures, but that list is not comprehensive. Only 40 people are included on that list. Some people are still missing. When we look at the Australian government's action, I think they have more than 400 people on the list. So we should look into this area of whether we can increase the number of individuals who are connected with the military junta. That is one issue. Probably we can increase the list and compare it to the political prisoners in Burma. In Burma now, more than 1,800 political prisoners still remain in prisons.

[\(1540\)](#)

That is something I strongly recommend. Also, regarding this first recommendation, we have to look at some existing investments from Canada. For example, Ivanhoe Mines, even though they bought their 50% share of assets on sale, is still, we believe, getting a profit from the operation, because the operation is still ongoing in Burma, and until and unless their assets are bought by a company, they are entitled to receive the profit from the operation in Burma.

The second recommendation I would like to make here is to increase humanitarian aid to 150,000 refugees and half a million internally displaced people inside the country.

Two weeks ago I was at the Thai-Burma border. I visited the most crowded refugee camps on the border, where more than 40,000 people are taking shelter. I was told that 5,000 people are living without food rations. The need is very compelling, and the living situation is so appalling. That's why I strongly urge the government to increase humanitarian aid to those people in need.

I want to put forth another comparison. Canada used to provide a huge amount of aid to Burma before the 1988 democratic uprising, during the time of the socialist government. The amount was \$20 million, and sometimes \$50 million. But now the government provides just \$2 million to those people. That's why I ask you to please consider increasing the humanitarian aid to these people.

The third recommendation I would like to make here is to create a fund of earmarked money to streamline civil society organizations inside and outside the country, because we need to support the democracy movement and to strengthen civil society

organizations working in Burma. Without those organizations, it is impossible to continue the journey of the democracy movement in Burma.

When I was in Chiang Mai, Mae Sot in Thailand, I met with members of democratic organizations, and they requested this kind of initiative from the Government of Canada.

The fourth recommendation I would like to make is to designate a senior Canadian official as a special representative to Burma. In order to discuss government policies and government measures, I think we need a special representative. That person would be assigned to go to meet with many counterparts in counterpart governments--for example European, the United States, Asian countries, China, and India. That's why I strongly recommend the government consider the possibility of having a special representative to Burma.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development again for inviting me to this hearing, and I hope the committee will be able to study the aforementioned recommendations.

Thank you very much.

The Chair:

Thank you very much.

We'll now proceed to Madame Dricot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Estelle Dricot (Professional Researcher, International Peace and Security Program, Institut québécois des hautes études internationales):

Good afternoon. I will be making my presentation in French.

Following the events of September 2007 and the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations in Burma, the United Nations Organization actively tried to find a solution. They tried to adopt resolutions, which are difficult to apply at the moment, including resolutions by the Security Council. In addition, a series of measures were taken nationally, and sanctions were implemented, like the sanctions imposed by Canada which have been broadly accepted and are among the most stringent internationally. I took part in the conference held two weeks ago, where experts from Burma were present. Apparently, the economic sanctions are considered necessary and have been well received, but we should increasingly be thinking about targeting them appropriately. Some individuals or some families in the military should be targeted directly, because at present the people of Burma are undergoing much too much hardship. They have been under sanctions for 20 years, and many feel that they simply cannot bear them any more. It is quite true that sanctions are a good way of putting pressure on the government in power, but we should think about imposing targeted sanctions.

Moreover, participants said at the same time that there should be an increase in humanitarian aid and assistance to reform in order to move towards a democratic transition. I am now coming to the area I really want to focus on, education. Most Burmese who left after the 1988 revolution are now in exile, or jailed inside the country. The number of intellectuals living in Burma is dropping, and in fact is now almost zero. Those living in exile have difficulty in making their voices heard, lack funding, or say

they lack support. They do get their message out to some extent, but have no support from governments in the international community. As a result, if there is one thing we should think about doing, it is increasing both financial and technical assistance.

I often say that there may be a forceful way of responding to the situation in Burma—resolutions and sanctions—but there is a more subtle response, dialogue. Unfortunately, dialogue is difficult. We have not succeeded in establishing a dialogue with the government in power. For the moment, we cannot bring together representatives of the government and representatives of the democratic party and ethnic groups around the same table.

I would also like to add a brief personal comment. Here in Canada, we should stop using such terms as "opponents" or "dissidents", and start talking about those who represent the democratic party, which was democratically elected in 1989. That would demonstrate Canada's clear support for Burmese people fighting for democracy. We have to stop seeing them as dissidents.

The forms of subtle response include dialogue and official meetings. We all agree what we need to increase official representation by the international community in Burma, and even that someone from Canada should go to Burma and try to meet with junta, the party in power.

[\(1545\)](#)

Canada and the international community must join forces to create a transition fund to strengthen education.

There is considerable untapped potential in the people of Burma living in exile throughout the world but also along the international borders and even within the country. I am fully aware that it will be more difficult, but the potential is there to capitalize on. Civil society must be prepared to take charge of the country when the time comes. While it is true that sanctions and resolutions are necessary, civil society must also be prepared to take charge. There is talk to that effect, but not often enough. Aid has always been provided, I want that to be clear, but it is insufficient. Aid in the form of scholarships must be increased, for example, to facilitate access for certain students to universities in Thailand, Australia, and possibly Canada, as Canada did at the time for South Africa. Supporting the media would be another way of assisting civil society, as would recognizing the various associations.

All segments of the population must receive assistance on the education front. We must reach out to the intellectual community, young people, women, ethnic minorities, and help these people so that they can develop. A lack of education has currently been forced on them, and these people are no longer able to defend or organize themselves. While it is true that the reign of terror has made people afraid and they react less, this lack of education is an important factor to consider. In my view, Canada could concentrate specifically on this aspect, in addition to providing humanitarian assistance.

In summary, talking about education also means focussing on policy guidelines: teaching the various groups to better understand their differences so that they can work together more collaboratively; strengthening their ability to negotiate, as we know that lasting solutions do not flow from pure confrontation, but rather from negotiated

approaches; and improving the capacity to manage and guide the segments of the population that are suffering.

If we achieve that, we will have an understanding of all segments of the population. I think we have just glimpsed a long-term solution.

When talking about education, we must not forget the monastic schools, which are the only ones in Burma that currently take in civilians. The universities are closed to the public and open only to children from military families. The people have not had universities for 20 years.

I would like to see clear, substantial support as part of this aid. I know that making this kind of commitment means being involved in a long journey requiring significant funding. When making such a commitment, we cannot expect solutions in the short term, but we must, at the same time, consider all steps taken by the Canadian government to date.

[\(1550\)](#)

And in conclusion, I thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair:

Thank you, Madame Dricot.
Madame Lévesque.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Micheline Lévesque (Regional Officer, Asia, Rights and Democracy):

Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. I feel quite at home here today. In fact, Rights and Democracy defines democracy as civil society participating in the political world. I think that for Canadian citizens, that happens on parliamentary committees. I must truly thank this committee and the Sub-Committee on Human Rights. Without your help, I do not think that the motion on Burma could have been adopted by the Canadian Parliament in May 2005. It is truly a collaborative undertaking by all members of civil society throughout Canada and parliamentarians of all stripes. Thank you so much. The Canadian Friends of Burma organization is here today. This motion has greatly contributed to encouraging parliamentarians to get more involved in this matter.

As you know, Rights and Democracy was created by the Parliament of Canada. Oddly enough, Burma and our institution have a common history. The act was adopted in 1988. If you recall, that was the year of what is called in English the 8.8.88 uprising, or the revolution of August 8, 1988. People took to the streets to call for elections, and the armed forces responded very violently. In Canada, the act was adopted in 1988, and in 1990, we opened our office in Montreal. In 1990, democratic elections took place in Burma. Our mandate involved promoting the International Bill of Human Rights as well

as democracy. That was how we started out. We had a budget, but still no programming. So for us, it was very easy to get involved in Burma.

The elections were held in 1990, and the reaction of the armed forces was to arrest members of Parliament. If you had been in Burma, ladies and gentlemen, you would have been considered criminals. The armed forces started arresting members of Parliament and banned Parliament from sitting. The members held a secret meeting and decided that some of them would have to leave the country. In 1988, the country was completely closed, no one knew anything about Burma. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi had not yet won the Nobel peace prize. Eight members therefore decided to leave the country and set up the government in exile. In 1990, Rights and Democracy was the first institution in the world to support this government in exile. Today many governments do support it, but at the time, we were the only one. We owe the establishing of our institution, through which we were able to provide that support, to the Parliament of Canada.

As regards the way to solve the problem with Burma, it is very clear: everyone knows that the solution lies in three-way dialogue. The United Nations has issued 28 resolutions calling for a three-way dialogue between the military regime, the National League for Democracy, which obtained 82% of the seats, and the representatives of the ethnic groups. The problem stems from the fact that the armed forces do not want to negotiate. Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy and the ethnic groups have repeatedly called on the various forms of the military regime to sit down at the negotiating table, and they continue to do so. The military, however, has no reason to agree to negotiate: they have it all. That is why we feel that with these sanctions, the military will end up negotiating, once they have realized that they are losing power and can no longer continue. Then, they will sit down at the table.

We believe that the military junta's policy has always been to gain time, to tell the international community not to worry, that negotiations would take place, but that first, something had to be done, then something else, and so on. These people are not, in fact, interested in dialogue, they will engage in it only if they have no other option. That is why we think Canadian sanctions would be a good way to support three-way dialogue in Burma.

I would like to go back to the motion adopted by the Parliament of Canada in 2005, adopted by you. It states that the committee believes the government should:

(c) provide tangible support to the legitimate authorities in Burma, specifically the government in exile (the National Coalition Government for the Union of Burma) and the Committee Representing the People's Parliament ;

[\(1555\)](#)

I would like to take a few minutes to explain the mandate of the government in exile and the CRPP, because I do not think that it is clear to everyone.

As I said earlier, the government in exile was created in 1990. It consisted of eight members who left Burma and whose mandate was very clear: as soon as Burma became a democratic country and parliamentarians could take back their seats in Parliament, the government in exile would be dissolved. At the time, there were 8 members of Parliament in exile, now there are about 34. They make up what is called the Members of Parliament Union. They are responsible for electing the government in exile every four years. The government in exile is actually made up of representatives of Aung San Suu Kyi, in other

words, the Parliament elected in 1990. These people were elected by the people of Burma, which is not the case with the Tibetan government in exile, for example, which was elected by the diaspora, or Tibetans in exile.

The Committee Representing the People's Parliament or the CRPP, was created in 1998 and is made up of 10 members. The military continues to refuse to say that it does not want to negotiate. For its part, the Committee Representing the People's Parliament has set up 10 committees that form a sort of small Parliament. These 10 committees are already examining legislation, decrees, and the Constitution, in short, things they want to improve once democracy prevails in the country. Naturally, the members of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament have suffered greatly. Some of them have been imprisoned, among other things. They have asked for the support of all parliamentarians throughout the world, and several Parliaments have adopted motions acknowledging the importance of the work being done by the CRPP. The government in exile and the CRPP were both born out of the 1990 elections.

To date, the Canadian government has never supported the government in exile or the CRPP. I have been working with Rights and Democracy for 13 years, and during all those years, Aung San Suu Kyi's representatives, Prime Minister Sein Win, of the government in exile, who is her cousin, has never met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs during any of his visits to Canada. Prime Minister Sein Win's father is the brother of General Aung San, who is the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the country to independence. Both were killed at the same time.

Civil society is, for the most part, in favour of the motions. We sincerely believe that they will weaken the military regime. On the one hand, the military regime must be weakened, and on the other, there must be support for the democratic forces, the legitimate forces, and civil society. As Tin Maung Htoo said earlier, the main problem in Canada is that no funds have been allocated to Burma. Other countries stopped their official development assistance in 1998, which is good, but they allocated this money to the government in exile or to humanitarian aid. As for us, we must constantly knock on doors, be it to try to offer humanitarian assistance, education or scholarships, and so on. We know that officials are aware of the situation. They are looking at how to proceed, based on their funds and rules, but in the meantime, Burma is going nowhere. Rare are the occasions when military regimes allow democratic elections. It is very difficult for us to support our partners in the field and to do what we would like to accomplish.

I want to say that I support my two colleagues. I think that education is crucial. I think I recall that during the apartheid regime in South Africa, Canada had an education fund. It would probably be easier to manage that kind of fund from the border. Be it through humanitarian assistance or the government in exile, it is important to strengthen these institutions.

Thank you.

[\(1600\)](#)

[\(1605\)](#)

[*English*]

The Chair:

Merci, Madame Lévesque.

We'll go to our first round and we'll go to Mr. Bagnell, please.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):

Thank you.

Thank you all for coming.

As you know, I'm the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Burma. We have about 40 members from all parties in the House and the Senate. I just came back from Burma not long ago and saw how serious it is. One of the leaders I met with was assassinated a couple of weeks later in the same room where we had met.

I'd like to know from Micheline and Tin, first of all, if you support the work we're doing. In particular, the government has done some great things, as you said--both aid and sanctions are very appreciated over there--but there are some more steps now that we've come up with that we'd like the government to take. I'd just like to ask Micheline and Tin if you would support those steps.

One step is we had a press conference not long ago that the political prisoners should be freed and monitored by an independent agency. Other steps: speak out against the sham referendum and election that are coming up starting in May, which the Zaw monks of Ontario and we are working on; lobby China and India and of course Thailand, behind closed doors, on the things they can do--they can do the most, because they have the most economic ties; help the parliamentary federation union of Burma in exile with their constitution, which they asked me for when I was over there, which wouldn't cost much; and help them lobby for a UN political presence in Rangoon.

Foreign aid, of course, as you mentioned, hopefully would be increased. We give hundreds of millions to Darfur, Palestine, and Afghanistan, and we only give \$2 million a year there. The rice has gone up twice since they've done their budget. They're really starving. It's very needed.

We could make recommendations on the horrible labour conditions and any actions we could take on the large dams and pipelines that could be funded by China or Thailand. In Burma it would give all sorts of revenue to the dictatorship.

And finally, we could lobby the ASEAN countries to really help their member friend in Burma.

The Chair:

Thank you, Mr. Bagnell.

Mr. Htoo.

Mr. Tin Maung Htoo:

Thank you, Mr. Larry Bagnell, for all your questions. There are lots of questions. Probably I can touch on a few of the questions, especially the political prisoner situation.

As far as we know, there are more than 1,800 political prisoners who remain in detention centres, and approximately 700 were arrested during the last uprising in September. Some of them are dying in prison because of torture and others from various forms of brutalities and one especially during interrogation. UN human rights special

reporter Mr. Pinheiro pointed out that more than 80 people were killed during the last uprising, but the government only confirmed a little over 30 people.

I was told recently that approximately 1,000 monks are still missing in Burma. One of the monk leaders who was in Quebec City attending the Quebec conference on Burma mentioned that 1,000 monks are still missing in Burma.

This political prisoner issue is a very important issue. Two weeks ago an organization based in Thailand launched a campaign for the release of political prisoners in Burma. They're trying to get more than 800,000 signatures from around the world calling for the release of all political prisoners in Burma.

Another important issue is the referendum--

The Chair:

You have to really speed up on the answers, because we have five minutes for the question and answer and I know Madam Lévesque.... Could you just sum up very quickly?

Mr. Tin Maung Htoo:

Yes, thank you.

The referendum is a very important one. Lots of people are talking about the role parties should play in this referendum. The referendum is for the draft constitution prepared by the military junta. As far as I know, the majority of people will vote against this constitution, because this is a sham and this is against democratic principles. For example, 25% of the parliamentary seats were taken by the military to be appointed by the commander-in-chief. Plus the commander-in-chief will appoint three cabinet positions--for example, home, defence, and border affairs.

What I can say is this constitution is totally against Canada's democratic principles. But, still, the Government of Canada hasn't taken any position yet on this referendum and this constitution.

[\(1610\)](#)

The Chair:

Thank you, Mr. Htoo.

Madame Lévesque, do you have some very small answer? Are you all right there?

[Translation]

Ms. Micheline Lévesque:

We support all of your actions, Larry. Thank you.

We feel that the role of the parliamentary friends of Burma is very important, and we have good communication with them. We thank them very much for their support.

The Chair:

Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois, it is nice to see you back at the committee. You have five minutes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I am very happy to see you again. We attended this international forum together. So many things were said that day that I am very happy to see you proposing plans that are already established. Basically, these plans pull together everything that was said during the forum. I'm very happy with that.

First of all, what role does China play with respect to Burma? I want to remind you that I only have five minutes.

Ms. Estelle Dricot:

In my humble opinion, China is currently Burma's main political and economic partner, along with Russia, of course. It would be wrong to think that China alone can influence Burma. I think there needs to be joint action by China, India, Russia, and above all ASEAN's partners, since Burma is part of ASEAN. That would be giving China too much importance. Given what is currently happening between China and Tibet, it would probably be time to find a way to negotiate. China cannot deal with Tibet and Burma at the same time.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois:

I asked you that question because everyone says the people must not suffer because of the sanctions imposed on Burma. Now, if we were to lift the sanctions, wouldn't China be inclined to help Burma again and to support the regime?

Ms. Estelle Dricot:

I want to clarify right away that the sanctions must not be lifted, they must be maintained. What I meant was that the sanctions must be targeted, and there is a way to do that. For example, we could target the military's bank accounts that everyone knows about and that are abroad and welcomed openly by Singapore. There are ways to target the sanctions. As Ms. Lévesque said, we must continue along these lines. The sanctions target the government and the junta, but we must not forget to support the people not only in a humanitarian way, but also morally. The people of Burma must not feel they are fighting this battle on their own. It is the responsibility of the international community to help them help themselves. That was clearly stated at the forum. From the sanitary and social perspective, I think there was a highly common approach. We must do them both.

[English]

The Chair:

Thank you, Madame Bourgeois.

We'll go to the government side. But just before we go to Mr. Goldring, I want to follow up on that. The United States has come forward with sanctions against Burma and we see other countries that have come forward with sanctions, and right away China and

India fill the void. They may not recognize those sanctions. So do we really gain? Are these sanctions more than just a feel-good thing for the country that imposes them, when right away China and India respond to negate the effect that the sanctions may have?

[\(1615\)](#)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Micheline Lévesque:

The Burmese population is oppressed by a military dictatorship. Sanctions are often applied to new investments and not the old ones. For instance, notably, there is Total Elf Fina, as well as all the other foreign companies that still operate in Burma. No company in Burma is entirely independent from the military regime. Most foreign investments take the shape of joint ventures with the military regime.

Some Burmese people told me that there was a good side to the sanctions because they at least ensured that there was some food left for the people. They explained that since sanctions were imposed on imports and exports, they have been able to buy fish and shrimp. Previously, the military regime exported everything. At least, food is cheaper now and they can even afford to eat fish.

If I understand correctly what Estelle means by targeted sanctions, they apply to individuals. This does not mean that sanctions like those that were approved by the Canadian government should be maintained. This is very good, and we think that it should go even further.

On the other hand, the manufacturing sector in Burma is very small. The population lives mainly in rural areas. The military regime is criticizing the sanctions. In my opinion, this is clear evidence that they are directly affected by them. If they are killing monks in the street, do you think that they would defend ordinary people?

[*English*]

The Chair:

Thank you.

Mr. Goldring, please pose your question, and the witness can answer later.

Mr. Peter Goldring:

All right. Thank you very much.

And certainly Canada is to be commended for acting quickly and putting sanctions in place and making a positive indication on the international community. But along the line of the sanctions, you had mentioned, Tin, that there are 40 on the list for Canada and 400 on the list from Australia. Does that mean that there are more businesses, or does that mean that there's more of a complexity on the Australian list? That was one question.

The second question that I'd like to ask relates to the border areas, where there has been a lot of strife and trouble, and that seems to be where the military gets its licence, you might say, to be more militarily in the country as a form of governing because of the

strife along those border areas. Is there any hope or is there any sense or feeling that there may be a more moderate faction of the military coming down that might have more sensitivity and more of a sense that they're willing to look at reforms? We all know that military regimes have been in place for longer periods of time, and they do change. So is there any sense that there can be change there as an interim step, to encourage democracy?

Mr. Tin Maung Htoo:

Thank you very much.

The list compiled by the Australian government includes the names of individuals who are targeted, who are related to the militaries, including the military leaders. The list is 417 people. It's only names, not entities. When we look at the Canadian list, there are only 40 people, and there are 44 entities, like some businesses and companies close to the military. So what I was trying to say was we can increase; we have a role to increase the list to even some individuals related to the military who are now living in Canada, for example in British Columbia and Toronto. I know a few individuals who are close to the military, like some cabinet ministers, and that's why we would need a task force, like a committee of the whole, to look into what we can do in terms of this enforcement for these measures.

On the second question, Micheline, can you answer?

[Translation]

Ms. Micheline Lévesque:

Regarding the possibility that some of the military leaders might be more flexible, let us take, for instance, Khin Nyunt who was, at the time, considered to be more democratic than the others. Now he, too, is under house arrest. I think that even the military people are unhappy. Many military persons are caught up in the system and we know that quite a few of them would change sides if they had the will to do so and if they knew that the democratic forces would prevail. In 1988, some military people put down their arms and joined with the demonstrators. You know what happened after that. There's torture, and perhaps there is even worse. When a military man crosses over to the democratic forces, he is considered a traitor.

Among other current events, they are moving the capital city. The military regime decided to move the capital into the forest at Pyinmana. We know that the very high ranking military persons are very unhappy with this, because their families live in Rangoon. They have to travel, it complicates their lives, and they are very unhappy. Members of the forces are not happy with shooting at monks, after all, they too are Buddhists. They do not like that.

There were demonstrations because the military leaders decided, overnight, to increase the price of fuel, petroleum, gasoline and oil. Prices went up two, three or four-fold overnight. They did this because they are in difficulty. General Than Shwe's daughter got married. I do not know if you have seen the pictures, but they had diamonds. The military people have a very expensive lifestyle. It is difficult for all the upper ranks to stay at that level.

The Burmese people believe that the revolution is not over, that people will once again take to the streets and that this time, the military will be on their side. This is what they are hoping for. Even the military people are unhappy, and as soon as they believe that they can join up with the democratic forces, they will do so.

[\(1620\)](#)

[*English*]

The Chair:

Thank you.

Unfortunately, the chair took some of the member's time, so he's basically out of time. Sorry about that, Peter.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our guests for being here today, and thank you for the work that you've done on this issue.

I would agree with the comments that were made about civil society really being critical in making us aware of what the concerns were in Burma, because it was so hard to find out what was going on after the crackdown. And to that, just before the crackdown in September, there was actually a meeting here in Ottawa around what could happen in Burma.

I'm glad you mentioned the motion that was passed in 2005 by the Parliament of the day. One of the points that was made was to support the democracy movement. I know, having spoken with people who were at the meetings in Ottawa, they really thought Canada was well placed to host both the democracy players' movement and resource it. That's something I just want to repeat for the record, that I think people should know Canada can do that. We can host, if you will, the disparate groups, bring them here to Canada and provide a place for them.

I know that everyone is aware that there's a problem in Burma, but we are hopeful that one day democracy will return and the people who are elected will take their rightful place.

I want to ask you about the SEMA measures that Canada has taken, the Special Economic Measures Act, which we all pushed the government to do, and they did. When the bureaucrats came to committee, they weren't able to tell us how many companies were affected by this. They did say—and this is not their fault, this is just the way it worked—that it was only going to affect future investments, so existing investments weren't going to be touched by this.

Do you have any information you can share with the committee as to what you know about Canadian investments that presently exist? I'd really like to know a little more about the Canada Pension Plan and if you're aware of investments presently that Canada has through the Canada Pension Plan, because that affects everyday Canadians, and most

Canadians would be shocked to know that they might still have investments in Burma through their pension plan.

The Chair:

Thank you, Mr. Dewar.
Mr. Htoo.

Mr. Tin Maung Htoo:

There are some Canadian companies still working in Burma--for instance, the Canadian helicopter company CHC. That company is providing helicopter services to Total and Unocal, the two [Chinese] huge companies providing all the technique and all the expertise for the natural gas pipelines. The gas is now currently being sent to Thailand. In that operation, the Canadian company CHC, which is based in Vancouver, is providing helicopter services.

Another one, of course, is Ivanhoe Mines. Even though they said that since early last year they had divested their assets, we believe they are still getting the profit from the operation, because the operation is still going on.

There are a few other small companies. For example, TransCanada is based in Calgary. The company has shown its interest in providing some kind of technical expertise for the transportation of natural gas from Burma to India, but we are still working on that issue. We are not sure whether this company has any operation or any technical work in that area.

Of course, CPP is the biggest issue. As far as we've studied it, CPP holds more than \$1 billion worth of shares with companies linked to Burma. I brought some information, but it wasn't translated, so I wasn't able to address it with you.

For example, CPP has shares with Ivanhoe Mines in the amount of \$67 million. CPP also holds investment with TransCanada in the amount of \$152 million and \$17 million with the Canadian helicopter corporation CHC. They hold \$263 million with Unocal, currently under Chevron--Chevron acquired Unocal a year ago, I believe--\$254 million with Power Corporation, and \$304 million with Total, a French energy company. This Total and Chevron-Unocal natural gas operation, I read today in the latest news, provided \$2.7 billion to the military junta last year.

In that sense, the investment of CPP-IB--the investment board--is not socially responsible. The government and the standing committee should study what.... You can make a regulation. We know everybody contributes to CPP. There are 17 million Canadians--working people, including members of Parliament--who are contributing premiums to CPP, but in a way, we are indirectly supporting oppression, a repression in Burma, by contributing our premiums.

This is a very appalling situation. I strongly suggest the committee study this issue.

[\(1625\)](#)

The Chair:

Thank you very much, Mr. Htoo.
That will conclude our meeting on Burma.

Mr. Rae, do you have a comment or a quick...?

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):

The only comment I wanted to make is that I thought the original submission Mr. Htoo made was very reasonable and very practical. I think the ideas he's suggested with respect to trying to monitor and focus and get some attention paid in an organized way are very practical suggestions, and I hope we will be able to move forward on them.

Frankly, the sanctions issue is more complicated.

[Translation]

We must understand that the economy is very complicated and that things are closely interconnected. This is why we must watch it very closely.

How can we practically provide humanitarian aid? It is crucial for us to help the democratic movement in a concrete way. Besides, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade should set up a centre for studying the situation.

I believe that these ideas are important. I congratulate you for your work.

[\(1630\)](#)

*The Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB) is federally incorporated, national non-governmental organization working for democracy and human rights in Burma since 1991. Contact: Suite 206, 145 Spruce St., Ottawa, K1R 6P1; Tel: 613.237.8056; Email: cfob@cfob.org; Web: www.cfob.org