

*Special Debate*

is what strategy is about. That is what foreign policy is about. We cannot ignore these larger issues.

Furthermore, what about the Americans? If we withdraw on the ground, the United States at this moment is taking the attitude that it can stand above these frays. It can fly over at 30,000 feet and not put troops on the ground. We have a moral superiority in dealing with our American colleagues at this time because of the tremendous contribution our forces are making. It establishes a credibility in dealing with the United States that we must never forget.

We owe it to our forces on the ground. We owe it to those magnificent troops.

Finally, we owe it to ourselves in terms of the United Nations. The House has often spoken about the need for the United Nations to be revitalized. This House has often spoken about the need for a more effective United Nations if Canada's interests and values are to be protected in the world. Those interests and those values will be protected by our continuing to be a reliable member of the United Nations forces and enabling the United Nations to improve its situation.

I leave by suggesting that our interests require us to stay at this time. Furthermore, our troops there are enforcing Canadian values by performing a humanitarian and difficult task in terrible circumstances with a devotion and superb professionalism of which all of us may be very proud.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before starting my speech, I would like to respond to my colleague from Rosedale. According to him, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was not proud of Canadian troops. I am sorry but the hon. member for Rosedale is distorting the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition.

My colleagues and I heard the speech delivered by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. He is a responsible man. He is more concerned about the living conditions of Canadian troops on peacekeeping missions. He is also concerned about the measures taken after they return home. He is concerned about the problem of suicide among Canadian troops. I wish to set the record straight: he is an honest and responsible man whom we all hold in high esteem.

It is with great sadness and emotion that I will, in this debate, try to paint a rather grim picture of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. Zvornik, Srebrenica, Bratunac and Grobnica were the sites of massacres in which up to 3,000 civilians were killed. The Omarska camp was the site of mass executions and torture. At the Celebici camp, at least 15 Serbs were beaten to death last August. An individual called Borislav Herak killed 230 any-

mous civilians. Last August, 50 Serbian women and children were killed by two Croatian members of paramilitary forces.

In Varjanta, more than 200 Muslims were massacred by the Serbian police. In May and June, between 2,000 and 3,000 Muslims were murdered by Serbian irregulars in a pig farm and factory near Brcko. Countless Muslim women were raped by Croatians.

That is the other side of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. That is the reality sometimes obscured by the rhetoric. That is, however, why our troops are serving with the UN.

How did it come to that? How did the situation deteriorate to this extent, as is often the case in armed conflicts, with innocent civilians being massacred, women raped, ethnic cleansing? I have no desire to set myself as a strategy expert nor do I claim to be. My main concern this evening and the most serious aspect of this conflict, in my view, is the impact on civilians and on our troops.

Coming back to the loss of human rights issue, here is some background information. It should be pointed out that all protagonists in the conflict have violated the rights of their minorities from the beginning. I would like to read from a document produced by the Canadian government. It reads:

• (2015)

“When the federal republic crumbled, the Serbs wanted to make sure that their people would remain together within the same territory. That is why they tried to spread their domination to regions where large ethnic minorities live as well as to new States run by non-Serbs. Other groups, such as the Croatians and the Muslims, wanted to consolidate their position in the new States by depriving other ethnic minorities, including the Serbs, of their rights”.

The ethnic cleansing sought by both sides led to murders, rapes, torture and other forms of intimidation aimed at making the members of particular ethnic groups flee their homes and villages and take refuge in the zones claimed by other ethnic groups. Such attempts to achieve ethnic cleansing have had tragic consequences: over 100,000 people killed and hundreds of thousands injured; thousands of Muslim women raped; and three million people displaced or forced to take refuge in neighbouring countries, without mentioning the acts of torture, the illegal arrests and the arbitrary detentions.

Let me discuss for a moment the impact of those rapes, particularly in the context of Muslim society. It has been reported in the media that women who are raped by men from other ethnic origins must often face reprisals from their own families. Almost a whole generation of women was sacrificed. Indeed, in addition to the physical and psychological trauma with which these women have to deal, their whole families and