

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the Canadian government to show international leadership to close the rape-death camps of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At least 20,000 women and little girls have been interned and gang raped. Many have died. Babies born of this violence and hatred are being abandoned. There is profound and indescribable trauma resulting from this attempted genocide and a lack of knowledge as to whether one or one's closest family members will survive the day.

My New Democrat colleagues and I have risen in the House and have written letters to the ministers asking Canada to target humanitarian aid to the survivors of the rape camps.

Following our interventions, \$250,000 was specifically targeted to aid the rape survivors. However, that really is just a drop in the bucket. Women are the key to rebuilding any society and these women have been severely traumatised. They will need much more help. I have again written to the minister responsible for external affairs asking that targeted aid be increased.

I want to thank the Liberal and Conservative MPs who signed their names to a statement that I wrote to close the camps. I think that kind of co-operation among the parties in this House goes a long way to show leadership. Unfortunately, there has been no further action.

I asked the minister responsible for the status of women whether Canada would act to get the UN to recognize rape as a war crime in the Geneva Convention and investigate it as such a crime. I am pleased that I have received an answer from her that was positive. Women around the world are watching our government on this very important issue.

I want to point out that rape is a crime of war and oppression around the world that Somalian, Peruvian, East Timorese women and women from every continent have experienced. In every war against races, religions and ethnicities, there is also within it a separate war against women.

I have recently written a letter to the new Minister of National Defence about the behaviour of peacekeeping

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troops overseas. They need training, a code of ethics and an enforcement of that code of ethics to make sure that they do not add to the oppression of the women and the cultures they encounter in their duties. Today I want an answer to as many of these questions as possible.

• (1810)

Further to my question in the House I want to know what specific action the Canadian government will take to close the rape and death camps in former Yugoslavia.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for raising this very important issue. The most harmful and least recognized human rights violation is violence against women. The systematic rape of women that is going on in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, certainly is the most disgusting example of this violence. On several occasions already the Canadian government has unequivocally condemned such barbaric and degrading actions. These actions aimed at terrorizing civilian populations constitute serious human rights violations.

The government has promised to have those responsible for such violations tried. That is why we endorse the creation of an international *ad hoc* court to try these crimes. We have responded to these violations with concrete measures, providing \$250,000 through the High Commissioner for Refugees to assist rape victims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have also set up an information centre to collect testimony from Canadians about these crimes. We are actively looking into other ways to help the victims.

At the session of the Commissions on Human Rights to be held in Geneva, Canada will exercise leadership and ask the international community again to make such violations stop. These rapes violate the Geneva convention and follow-on protocols.

We understand that the expert commission set up by the UN to look into allegations of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia will investigate this systematic raping as part of its mandate, and that there will be a Canadian, in the person of Commander William Fiedrich, on this commission.