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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Combat Mission Against ISIS

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House on behalf of my riding of South Surrey—White Rock. I congratulate you on being in the chair.

I want to speak to the motion that has been put forward by my hon. colleague.

As former mayor of the city of Surrey, where over 95 languages are spoken and which is home to the largest number of government-assisted refugees in the province of British Columbia, I am well aware of the issues on the ground that the refugees are faced with and the horrific conditions that many have endured.

To this point, the Syrian and Iraqi-based crisis has required a multi-faceted approach, which has been continually supported and maintained by the Conservatives.

I want to go back a bit and talk about the CF-18 fighter jets. In October, 2014, those jets bombed weapons caches, training facilities, critical infrastructure, and command centres. The Canadian Special Operations Forces have trained more than 1,100 soldiers on the ground.

With regard to humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people, the Conservatives, on behalf of Canadians, provided food for almost 2 million people and relief supplies for 1.2 million. In Syria, starting in 2012, we committed \$503 million in international humanitarian aid. In addition, we understood the need to identify and deal with the root causes in the country of origin, as well as helping the people who were fleeing the violence. Some 10,000 refugees were processed or in the final stages of being processed when we committed to an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees. We wanted to ensure that there was a more secure and more robust screening process in place due to current global events.

As I stated, this effort to defeat ISIS has to be multi-faceted. That is the only approach that we have ever supported. There are two main points to emphasize. The first is to maintain the air combat mission of the CF-18 fighter jets in the fight against ISIS. The second is to reconfirm our commitment to our allies.

The United Nations Security Council determined that ISIL constituted an unprecedented threat to international peace and security, and further called upon its member states to take all necessary measures to prevent and suppress its terrorist acts on territory under its control in Syria and Iraq.

The foreign affairs minister for the Kurdistan regional government said:

We would like to tell them that the air strikes have been effective, they have helped us a great deal. They have helped save lives...And if it were for us [to decide], we request that to continue.

When President Obama referred to his closest allies as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, I would suggest that Canada is not back.

From a purely moral perspective, how can we turn our backs on this coalition and our closest allies, including the people still living in Syria and Iraq who face the violence and brutality of ISIS on a daily basis? Let me remind the Liberal government exactly what we have been witness to.

We have seen the recent attacks and murders of innocent people in Paris, Lebanon, and Beirut. We have also been witness to the sheer brutality of ISIS as demonstrated by the beheading of foreign aid workers, journalists from the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, Japan, and 21 Egyptians who were lined up on a beach, and the burning alive of a Jordanian coalition pilot. Most disturbing of all, as pointed out by the member for Calgary Centre-North on Monday, is the genocide of a reported 8,000 Yazidi women and young girls. Thousands of others have been kidnapped, sold and raped.

I am deeply saddened as a Canadian, as a woman, and as a mother that Canada would not stand with her allies and protect these innocent people.

I would like to reinforce this point in a much more personal way.

For over a year, I have been associated with two young Yazidi orphan girls. They were once a family of five. These girls were forced to watch their mother be raped and then shot in the head. They were forced to watch as their father was beheaded and then witnessed their 9-year-old brother crucified. Their home was burned to the ground and their livestock and pets were slaughtered. It was only by a sheer miracle that they managed to escape the chaos and get safely to a refugee camp. No child should have to witness such horror.

I heard the Prime Minister say on Monday "...what we will not do is continue trying to talk about it and give ISIS any free publicity". That comment frankly is offensive to every man, woman, and child who has been brutalized by ISIS. We have to talk about it and we cannot pretend it does not exist. Nor can we be silent. We need to stand with our allies, maintain the air combat mission of the CF-18 fighter jets, continue the humanitarian aid that we started in 2012, and properly screen and support the refugees coming to Canada in a meaningful way so they can succeed and live in a country that welcomes them.

However, we also need to deal with the root causes in Syria and Iraq, namely, ISIS, because many of those who are fleeing their homeland do not want to leave, but they have no choice.

This is why the motion before the House is so important. As I stated earlier, this has to continue to be a multi-faceted approach, and we cannot and must not be silent on this issue.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):

Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite keeps referring to this terrorist death cult as ISIS, Islamic state. Does she believe that this death cult reflects the tenets of Islam? Does she believe that in fact it is a state? If not, why continue using terminology that lends credence and legitimacy to this death cult? Why not refer to it as Daesh, as our allies do.

Ms. Dianne Watts:

Madam Speaker, the terminology that has been used is very familiar to those in the general public. We can define it any way we want, but the fact is it is killing hundreds of thousands of people who are fleeing from their country. It is murdering and raping young girls and children. That is what we have to pay attention to.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):

Madam Speaker, I am glad to see you in the seat.

Last month the UN Security Council urged its members to intensify their efforts to stem the flow of arms and funds to foreign terrorist fights and to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism. Specifically, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has commented, "Over the longer-term, the biggest threat to terrorists is not the power of missiles – it is the politics of inclusion." The truth is air strikes are sadly being used as a recruitment tool for ISIL.

Could the member please explain why they believe bombing works, given the many examples we have from the region that bombing does not in fact contribute in any way to a peaceful outcome?

Ms. Dianne Watts:

Madam Speaker, I will answer the member's question in a two-fold way. I totally agree that the financial flow and the weapons need to be addressed as part of the multi-faceted approach.

However, I would also say that we look at bombing weapons caches, training facilities, critical infrastructures, and command centres. That is the focus in making sure that we are crippling them in their country of origin where they cannot expand.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I listened to the story by the member for South Surrey—White Rock about the horrors that are being visited upon people in Syria and Iraq by the Islamic State. It really struck me that the Liberal Party has long argued for the policy of the responsibility to protect vulnerable persons who are subject to atrocities just like the ones that the member enunciated here in the House of Commons. It also strikes me that it is a classic position of the Liberal Party to say one thing and do another. The Liberal Party has long argued for the responsibility to protect doctrine and yet when atrocities the likes of which we have not seen or witnessed in recent memory are happening on a widespread scale within the Islamic State, it suddenly abandons the policy and no longer believes that military or combat action is necessary to counter this threat and to ensure the protection of these vulnerable persons.

It is something that really struck me when I was listening to the member's speech and I am wondering if she would care to comment.

Ms. Dianne Watts:

Madam Speaker, it strikes me as a bit odd as well when I hear the Liberal government talk about the vulnerability of young women and girls and about protecting them when over 8,000 young women and girls have been murdered. I am astounded that the Liberal government would not take a stronger position. In fact, I am ashamed.