

Women, Peace and Security—Syrian Women

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Question Period—Foreign Affairs

February 18, 2016

The Honorable Senator Mobina S. B. Jaffer:

Minister Dion, we are very pleased to have you here today. Welcome.

Before I ask you my question, I want to thank you for helping to bring the Congolese Canadian children home, and I urge you to continue the great work you are doing to bring the other 16 home.

Minister, in 2000 Canada was the leader when it came to women, peace and security. Canada was the leader in the United Nations on Resolution 1325, which ensured that women were at the decision- and peace-making table. We were the first country to take 17 women to the peace table in Darfur.

Minister, I just came back from Sweden. The Swedish foreign minister has made the women, peace and security agenda the foreign policy of Sweden. What are your plans for making sure that Syrian women are at the peace table?

Hon. Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs: Senator, you mentioned a lot of issues. We'll start with the families and the Republic of Congo. You're right, we have been able to reunite some of these families, but there are still 16 children and 13 families in a terrible situation.

Of course, in France and the United States it's hundreds of families, but we're addressing that with the Government of Congo. They are also facing a situation where it's the tenth anniversary of their constitution, and we want to make sure the next election goes well.

They have neighbouring countries where the elections are in jeopardy, and we have terrible concerns. We don't want the same in the Congo as we see in Burundi.

You mentioned the support of this resolution of the United Nations. I thank you very much for giving me notice of your question . My department prepared a long answer for you, but it would take the rest of Question Period to give you all the details.

As you know, Prime Minister Trudeau made it a strong priority to promote gender equity everywhere, in Canada and abroad, for Aboriginal women, for all people in the world. It's part of the mandate letter and is a strong priority, and the symbol of it that resonates around the world is that he appointed as many female as male ministers.

I have this long answer for you, but I see all the honourable senators who want to ask questions so I will provide this answer to my colleagues in the Senate if there is interest.

Biography

Senator

Mobina S. B. Jaffer