

OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

Monday, May 7, 2007

Afghanistan

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the chaos, the confusion--

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker:

Order. The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale has the floor.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla:

Mr. Speaker, the chaos, the confusion and the cover-ups continue. The only way Canadians can get honest answers is through affidavits filed in Federal Court.

At first, there was no report and then there was a report. Then the report showed up all blacked out and now Ms. Colleen Swords, an employee of Foreign Affairs Canada, testified that she has seen a written report prepared by the Correctional Service of Canada related to the abuse of detainees.

Will the Minister of Public Safety table this report in the House? Canadians want to know the truth.

(1430)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, let us be very frank about what is happening here. The only confusion, the only misstatement of fact, the only deliberate attempt to distort what is going on here is coming from the opposition benches.

Let me read clearly from an affidavit filed by the vice-chief of the defence staff. He said, “Nothing in the circumstances described can lead to a conclusion that the individual was tortured and that CF members were aware of such torture”.

If members in the field were not aware of any allegations of torture or actual torture, how would any member of the government be aware?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the government would not be aware because it is confused. It has been a week of chaos. It has been a week of confusion. It has been a week of cover-ups. Canadians really want to know the truth.

On Friday the foreign affairs minister told the House that there were more than two cases of alleged detainee abuse. Exactly how many cases of prisoner abuse is the Minister of Foreign Affairs aware of? How many written reports have been prepared? When are those reports going to be made public? Canadians want to know.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, what we have done is clean up the mess left in place by the previous government. We have now an enhanced agreement that allows for unfettered access. It allows for private access. It improves the relationship between the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. It improves access available by the Red Cross.

What we have done is improve the situation to do our very best to ensure that the Afghan government has the capacity and the ability to do its utmost to protect detainees.