

January 14, 2020

Nathaniel Erskine-Smith  
1902 Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON M4C 1J4

Dear Nathaniel Erskine-Smith,

RE: Ensuring that Parliament implements human rights due diligence for Canadian companies conducting business both in Canada and internationally.

I write to you as one of your constituents who is very concerned with the allegations being aimed at multiple Canadian companies over the past few years. Namely the companies Bombardier Inc. and Nevsun Resources Ltd.

In 2018, Bombardier Inc. accepted a 8 million dollar contract from Russia to install a railroad system near Ukraine's borders. This railway would connect Russia's western and southern military districts, clearly serving as a way to easily move military equipment and personnel to the front lines in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Although Olivier Marcil, a spokesman for Bombardier, claims that the railway is just to safely transport goods and passengers between the Voronezh and Rostov regions of Russia, this does not discount the military implications, since he did not specify that the passengers and goods are non-military related when that was the issue that needed to be addressed. This is a dismissive answer to such a large issue, especially since assisting Russia in this conflict is going directly against the Canadian foreign policy that has put sanctions on Russia due to this ongoing conflict.

The allegations against a different Canadian mining company, Nevsun Resources Ltd., are especially numerous. Allegations of slavery (forced labour/conscripted labour), torture, imprisonment, and being forced to work in inhuman/unsafe conditions were all aimed at Nevsun by the Eritrean plaintiffs, Gize Yebeyo Araya, Kesete Tekle Fshazion, and Mihretab Yemane Tekle, who worked in their gold mines. They claim that the company knew of or should have known of the forced labour and human rights abuse happening in their mines, that the company failed to do anything about it, and continued to work with the Eritrean government, even with its spotted track record of human rights violations. Three lawsuits were launched at the company, and the case went to the Supreme Court of Canada. Recently, in February of last year, the case was settled out of court, and the Canadian court ruling opened the way for lawsuits to be filed against companies for human rights abuses committed overseas.

Both myself and Amnesty International believe this is a huge step in the right direction and it is a very commendable thing to do. But allowing lawsuits is ultimately a temporary fix. Companies will weigh the risk vs. reward, and see if they can still cut corners even with the potential monetary loss, due to how much they make because of this conscripted labour. I believe that merely promoting good business practices is not enough, and that a law must be put in place so that Canadian companies must follow Canadian ideals even when working overseas. True change will only come once these companies can be held criminally responsible.

I thank you in advance for reading my letter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Amelia Kerr

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There has been no response from my MP, no.