

## **SPEECH TO THE SERGEI MAGNITSKY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS**

**London**

Thursday, 18 November 2021

**\*\*\* CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY \*\*\***

Firstly thank you, and it is an honour to be here in this room with every one of you.

I'd like to thank Bill, not only for his generosity, not only for this award, and for this award ceremony, but also for all he has done to make the world a better place. For understanding what the world could be. For understanding what the world should be.

Also, he has shown himself to be a defender of all humanity through the care, the deep care, he has shown to Sergei Magnitsky and his memory. As he said this afternoon at the Henry Jackson Society – “it means Sergei Magnitsky’s death is not meaningless”.

As Bill knows, and I have witnessed the tight group of good people whom he has around him, it is not possible to do this alone. So, I would like to acknowledge the amazing people I have met over the last few days.

I would like to acknowledge the following people.

Michael Danby, my friend who has retired from Australian politics now, and who is known to some of you, and is a force of nature, and was the first person I spoke to about Magnitsky legislation after seeing Bill Browder being interviewed on the ABC in Australia.

Most of Michael's family were murdered in the Holocaust. He said to me once when he was being outspoken on an issue – and probably in trouble knowing Michael – “how can someone like me not speak for the oppressed? If people like me don't fight then who am I? What am I doing in Parliament?”

I think these are very wise words, and words I carry with me.

I'd like to thank my own Party for adopting support for Magnitsky legislation. We've never given up on having this law.

It's been delightful to find allies across the aisle and in the crossbench.

I'd like to thank Marise Payne, the Australian Foreign Minister, who sent a reference on Magnitsky to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for it to enquire into Australia's need for Magnitsky legislation, and her office, especially her Chief of Staff, for all of their work.

I'd like to thank my fellow “Wolverines” – and there is a story behind that name – but I would like to thank them, especially Andrew Hastie, who is now an Assistant Minister for Defence and the Member for Canning, and my fellow Victorian Senator, James Paterson. James and I wrote an opinion piece in The Australian newspaper together, and this has been a bipartisan effort ever since.

I'd also like to acknowledge my IPAC co-chairs who are in the room. IPAC is the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, and there is no surprise there is overlap between IPAC and the people in this room for Magnitsky. I'd also like to acknowledge the very able secretariat led by Luke De Pulford.

All of these people, all of you in this room – you understand the need for Magnitsky legislation, and why we cannot let the dregs of humanity, those who steal from their compatriots, who torture and murder, who delight in causing fear, who place their citizens in concentration camps, who enforce slavery and arbitrary detention – all of these people in the Australian Parliament whom I've mentioned, and all of the people in this room understand why we as human beings who believe in the dignity of human beings cannot allow such evil to go on unchallenged.

And all of the people who understand why Magnitsky legislation is necessary understand why democracies must be supreme.

President Kennedy said in his Inaugural Address:

*"...that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God."*

He was of course, when he said these words referring to the Soviet Union – *La plus ça change...*

I'm not saying that democracies are always right. After all, it was two years after that Inaugural Address, and it was from his jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama that Martin Luther King Jr wrote these words that should still ring in our ears, and they certainly ring in mine very often:

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."*

But it is the democracies where there is sunlight and transparency, that have a rule of law that respect the rights of minorities, that believe in free and fair elections, that believe in the freedom of the press, that believe in human rights. It is they that are the Promised Land for those who suffer at the mean and ugly and choking hands of authoritarian regimes. Democracies need to grow, not to contract.

And for those of us in this room who do not hold out an appeasing hand to those who commit human rights abuses, who do not hold out a grasping hand to those who engage in large-scale corruption, to those who tell these evil people – "no, we will not look away while you do wrong" – but rather look them straight in the eye and say – "we shall make pariahs of you all".

For those in this room who choose to fight as Bill has chosen to fight, for those who will fight for justice and righteousness, you have made the only choice there is to make.

I'm so grateful there are people like Bill Browder in the world – and that had me thinking. So, I am going to nominate Bill for the Nobel Peace Prize. As a member of a National Assembly or a National Parliament I am able to do so. I am going to encourage – possibly hound – my fellow legislators to nominate Bill as well, and the people in this room who are eligible to nominate him.

We will have a campaign. This will bring more attention to Sergei Magnitsky and his death as well. It will mean, as Bill hopes, that his death is not meaningless. We will start now.

Thank you once again. It is an honour to be with every one of you in this room.

Thank you.

**ENDS**