

Justice is the only way to find closure for families of victims of Flight PS752

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal Journalism Initiative

The sudden loss of family members in what's being called an act of 'murder' is incomprehensible. In an instant, the blink of an eye, all hopes, dreams and future plans are gone. That's what family members of 176 passengers who died on Ukrainian Flight PS752 are struggling with. The aggressive act by the Iranian military took place Jan. 8, 2020. The pandemic has derailed plans for large-scale, open vigils or ceremonies to mark the anniversary and the loss. But for people like Nobleton's Shahin Moghaddam, the event was marked with a small, intimate family gathering, under current lockdown rules. He lost his 39-year-old wife Shakiba Feghahati, and their 10-year-old son Rosstin Moghaddam. He planted two trees in front of his home and he often sees residents stopping to pay tribute, or leave flowers behind. A walk of remembrance in Toronto, with supporters carrying photos of all victims, took place through empty city streets. Moghaddam and many other family members shared a teleconference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and MPs Jan. 7. The messages of support and condolences do little to ease the pain. Moghaddam said few can relate to his situation and the pandemic hindered regular gatherings with friends, family and other victims, as a means of healing. He still can't sleep through the night and he's taken a lot of time off of work. He said most of us plan our lives 'we go to school, graduate, get jobs and settle down to raise families. We set goals.' There is no hope, no future (for us),' he said. 'Our plans are gone.' Aside from the emotional scars, the reality of the world comes crashing in. Bills pile up and there has been no relief for families from any source or any government. Moghaddam pointed out several families of victims had to sell their homes and cars just to pay their bills. 'This is our real life,' he observed. Moghaddam was instrumental in forming the Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims. With contacts throughout Iran, they're doing their own investigation, raising awareness and lobbying the government to take action. 'One of the central missions of our Association is to seek justice and investigate the truth of the events leading to the attack on Flight PS752,' says the group's website. This is important for two reasons, they say. First, the only way to bring any closure to the families of victims is by disclosing the truth and punishing the perpetrators. Second, this process is crucial in reducing the chances of similar events from occurring in future by forcing the parties at fault to alter their dangerous behaviour. 'We, the families of victims, want a full investigation into all circumstances and decision-making related to the attack on flight PS752 and the murder of its passengers and crew. We will not rest until the perpetrators are brought to justice.' Through consultations with top lawyers in the field of international law and human rights, the Association is working with all interested governments to advance these goals. They are consolidating information from families and collecting all relevant facts from external sources. 'We call on all individuals with relevant information to please come forward and help us in our mission.' For more, visit the website at <https://www.ps752justice.com/> Moghaddam said plans are in the works for a petition, to be presented in Parliament. While the Canadian government has been open and receptive to the families, Moghaddam wants stronger action, calling for the Iranian government to be held accountable in world court. Seeing the accused in court is really the only 'justice' for families, he said. They're waiting on Canada's official response following Iran's final report on the matter. He hopes Canadian and Ukrainian officials will lead the way and get things done. Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was tragically shot down by two successive surface-to-air missiles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) shortly after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA) on Jan. 8, 2020. All 176 passengers and crew were killed. These passengers included citizens of Iran, Canada, Ukraine, Sweden, Afghanistan, and the United Kingdom. Of the 167 passengers, 138 were travelling to Canada via Ukraine, including 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents. The majority of the passengers were children, university students, distinguished academics, and eminent professionals who had travelled during Christmas break. This atrocious attack robbed many young souls of their hopes and dreams, left countless families deeply scarred, and shook the conscience of the world. The largest Canadian loss of life since the 1980s, this devastating crash claimed 57 citizens, including men, women and children. York region students, an eye surgeon, two realtors, a York Region employee and a dentist with ties to York, also perished in the crash.