

Association wants new government to take the lead on PS752 investigation

By Mark Pavilons**Editor**

The search for truth and justice never takes a break. The families of victims of Ukrainian Flight 752 pressed candidates during the election to find those answers. And they're hoping the re-elected Liberal government will be willing to take the process to the next level. 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 January 8, 2020. All 177 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. Hamed Esmaeilion, of the Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims, said they have four main requests for politicians: They want the government to take Iran to the International Court of Justice to answer for their crimes. They also want the RCMP to open a criminal case. The association is asking Ottawa to officially list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. In June 2018, the House of Commons passed a motion overwhelmingly, with Liberal caucus support, calling on the federal government to do just that. Yet, it hasn't happened and the Association would like to see this as soon as possible. "Hopefully, the newly elected government will make this a priority," Esmaeilion said. The group had hoped the federal government's forensic report on the incident, released this past June, would have shed some light on the matter. But it contained no new information and no firm commitment. While the conclusion is clear that Iran through its actions bears full and complete responsibility, the government stopped short of calling it an intentional act. However, Justin Trudeau vowed to "pursue all available options, including recourse to the International Court of Justice." The Association will hold him to that promise. Esmaeilion said they will have their own report coming out in the next month or so. Many experts have contributed to this and hopes are it will make it to the world stage and be seen as a call to action. Over the past 20 months or so, there have been many bits and pieces to this puzzle and a lot of "detective work." They want to see all of the evidence, data, photos, etc. collected by agencies around the world. Some information may be classified and sensitive, but the people have a right to see this. Esmaeilion, who lost a wife and daughter in the destruction of PS752, said they hope an enthusiastic group of newly elected MPs will take charge and encourage this sharing of information. Until now, it's all been very "disappointing," he said. He wants re-elected Trudeau to follow through and take it to the next step. The Canadian government, he stresses, has to deal with the world's "rogue states." "Once the truth is revealed, the path to justice is easier," he observed.