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political rights was dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of development. But it stipulated that all human rights were nonetheless indivisible and inalienable. The initiative was influenced by the Commonwealth heads-of-government action the preceding June to single out Uganda as a serious violator of human rights. The Commonwealth action was, I might add, the result of Prime Minister Trudeau's determination that the Commonwealth should not employ a double standard. While condemning the abhorrent system of *apartheid* in South Africa, it could not overlook the odious practices of the Ugandan regime.

In line with the promising trend of increasing Third World involvement, the Human Rights Commission this year took *in camera* decisions relating to situations in nine different countries. It set a significant precedent by making public the fact that some action *vis-à-vis* these nine countries was in progress. Though a small beginning, these developments are commendable. Only as such actions become less exceptional will an international climate of opinion be established permitting the systematic examination of gross violations on an apolitical basis.

When should human-rights situations involve Canada more directly?

I turn now to the question of when and in what manner the Canadian Government should intercede when human rights are being violated in other countries. The question is not easily answered. No country has an unblemished human-rights record. In almost all countries, conditions of internal insecurity or extreme stress can lead to the setting-aside of established norms. Even the normal performance in dozens of countries falls well below accepted standards. Amnesty International currently places some 60 countries on its list of nations practising torture. Freedom House has another 100 on its list of societies that, judged from the Western democratic point of view, are not free. If Canada were to take up human-rights causes in many countries simultaneously, our efforts would be so diffuse that they would be unproductive. They would also not be taken seriously. We must, then, be prudent and focus our actions where they are most needed and where they may have a useful effect.

Canadian priorities

As a priority, we must seek international action, and consider as well bilateral action, when there is reliable evidence that the grossest of human-rights violations are systematically perpetrated. We should act where there is evidence of genocide, mass murder and widespread repression, or evidence of a government's intentionally depriving a group or a region of basic resources for survival.

Apart from these extreme cases, there is also a place for Canadian action in serious human-rights situations of direct concern to Canadians, and where close links of one nature or another exist. We can in such cases, where reliable evidence exists, examine whether there is some action, apart from multilateral action, which the government can take to seek improvement in the situation. We must bear in mind that, if we seek to rectify isolated abuses or aberrations in a state's normal performance in the human-rights field, there may be prospects for progress. But if we seek to alter a firm policy or the fundamental basis of another state's society, the issue is not likely to be resolved quickly or easily. It is not desirable to generalize on the circumstances in which action should be taken or the means by which it should be taken. Each situation must

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