

This type of action by groups or individuals against diplomatic or consular facilities in Canada must not be tolerated. The Canadian government has the responsibility to protect diplomatic or consular facilities and personnel under the Vienna Conventions and it is determined to ensure that this responsibility is honoured.

Apart, however, from the larger issue of diplomatic protection in general, I am particularly concerned about the series of deplorable incidents which have involved Indian diplomatic and consular personnel and property in Canada. Our friendship with India dates from before that country's independence thirty-seven years ago and our bilateral relations are now strong and mutually beneficial. The recent campaign by some groups within Canada to embarrass and impede the activities of Indian government representatives in our country is entirely out of keeping with the spirit of our relationship. Furthermore, the anniversary of Indian independence celebrates an occasion of profound historical importance, because it was this event that began the whole process of decolonization and established the basis of the modern Commonwealth. It is entirely unacceptable that demonstrators should attempt by force, and in defiance of police requests, to prevent the raising of the Indian flag in recognition of this great achievement.

I wish to make a further important point. It is not tolerable that individuals or groups, however strong their concerns and convictions, should take illegal action against diplomatic or consular facilities in Canada. Violent action by demonstrators, including illegal trespass and physical violence against officials of foreign governments, only serves to detract from the case they are trying to make. Furthermore, the Canadian government is fully aware of its international responsibilities, and the competent Canadian authorities are very actively reviewing the situation with regard to the prosecution of those who may have broken the law.

In expressing the Canadian government's regret over this incident and other incidents, including the reprehensible attack on the Indian Acting High Commissioner last month, I would stress again that such illegal actions can not and will not be tolerated.