

*Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

# News Release

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April 27, 1998 No. 100

## CANADA CONDEMNS THE MURDER OF GUATEMALAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST BISHOP JUAN GERARDI

Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy today strongly condemned the murder last night of Bishop Juan Gerardi,

Co-ordinator of the Human Rights Office of the Archiepiscopate of Guatemala. Bishop Gerardi was an active campaigner for human rights and had played an important part in Guatemala's peace process.

"It is particularly distressing that this brutal crime comes only two days after the release of the Church's report on the human rights violations and atrocities during Guatemala's 36-year civil conflict," said Minister Axworthy. "Canada calls on the Government of Guatemala to undertake a vigorous and rapid investigation of this crime and to bring the perpetrators to justice."

"We express our sympathy and condolences to Bishop Gerardi's family and co-workers," added Minister Axworthy. "Canada will continue to support human rights workers and organizations in Guatemala."

Canada, through its peacebuilding fund and its bilateral aid program, supports implementation of the peace accords and peacebuilding in Guatemala. This includes five civilian police human rights monitors for the United Nations Mission, support to Guatemala's "Truth Commission," alternative conflict resolution, and community reconciliation through socio-economic reactivation projects in ex-conflict zones.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

[http://198.103.104.118/minpub/Publication.asp?FileSpec=/Min\\_Pub\\_Docs/100546.htm](http://198.103.104.118/minpub/Publication.asp?FileSpec=/Min_Pub_Docs/100546.htm)

13/07/01