

RECOMMENDATION 6

Canada should strongly protest the February 2004 electoral process that disqualified serving parliamentarians and appeal to Iran to conduct open and fair democratic elections. Canada should also continue to work closely with other countries in multilateral forums, and with democratic forces inside Iran, including where still possible through parliamentary and political channels, to press for improvements in Iran's human rights performance.

The Government remains highly concerned about Iran's poor human rights performance, particularly issues related to the independence of the judiciary, arbitrary detention, freedom of expression, and the treatment of women, religious minorities, and inmates. The worrisome conduct of the elections in February 2004, marred by the disqualification of one-third of candidates, including serving parliamentarians and the closures of newspapers and websites associated with the campaign was also an area of serious concern. As a result, the Government continues to pursue a policy of controlled engagement with Iran and has clearly indicated that the development of closer bilateral ties with Iran hinges on progress in Iran's human rights performance and the promotion of democracy. The Government has been forthright and frank in making its views known to Iranians.

In both 2003 and 2004, The Government successfully worked with other like-minded partners to bring forward resolutions critical of Iran's lack of respect for human rights at the United Nations General Assembly. We have pursued these resolutions in the belief that joint international action will demonstrate to the Iranian Government that constructive change is needed. The text of the most recent resolution takes into account the positive changes observed in Iran over the past year, and emphasizes those issues which continue to cause concern. In all, 40 States co-sponsored the resolution with Canada, which was adopted by the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 17 November 2004 by a vote of 69 in favour, with 55 against and 51 abstentions. The resolution process sends a powerful political message: it focuses the attention of the international community on systematic and persistent human rights violations by Iranian authorities, stimulating debate on the situation and forcing Iran to account for its record.

The Government has also engaged in dialogue with the Special Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights on our concerns on Iran's human rights performance. Some of these UN bodies have already visited Iran, and issued recommendations for improvement. We regularly encourage Iran to act to implement these recommendations, as well as facilitate the visits of other Special Mechanisms including the Special Rapporteur on Torture.