

What has Canada been able to achieve in the Commission over our years of membership?

First I would like to give you a brief report on the current session, running from February 6 to March 16, on which we are still consolidating our final reports. It was not marked by any spectacular breakthrough, but there was good progress on a number of issues.

As I have already indicated, the Commission produced a draft Convention on Torture, which has been high among Canada's objectives, and to which our delegations have devoted a great deal of effort. If adopted by the General Assembly, this convention will give a clear definition of the crime of torture, and establish definite obligations on states parties to prevent such abuses, to punish those who may commit them, and to compensate the victims.

As a result of a Canadian initiative, the Commission will annually receive and consider a report on possible human rights implications of states of seige or emergency which may exist in various countries, a situation which more often than not results in the severe limitation or violation of the rights of the individual.

Canada supported proposals which have strengthened the continuing operations of the Working Group on "Disappearances" and the Special Rapporteur on "Summary Executions".

Canada successfully launched initiatives on Prisoners of Conscience and on the Rights of the Disabled and obtained consensus support for continuing efforts to improve ways to deal with, and if possible prevent, mass exoduses of persons from any state as a result of violations of human rights.

After obtaining some improvements in drafts, our delegation was able to join in the Commission's approval of resolutions on Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile.

The Commission approved the appointment of Special Rapporteurs for Iran and Afghanistan, which should improve its ability to consider the unsatisfactory state of human rights in those two countries.

Consideration on Poland was deferred until the next session, but this at least will ensure that the situation there may be debated at that time.