

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, today made the following statement on the detention and internal exile of the distinguished Soviet physicist, Andrei Sakharov:

"The Canadian Government condemns the action taken by the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in summarily stripping Dr. Andrei Sakharov of his Soviet honours and in sentencing this world renowned physicist to internal exile within the U.S.S.R. Dr. Sakharov is a highly distinguished member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and one of the Soviet Union's leading human rights advocates. He is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and is admired throughout the world for his dedication to man's fundamental freedoms and for his humanitarian efforts on behalf of Soviet dissidents and their families.

Dr. Sakharov has an immense following in Canada among those who share his devotion to the rule of law and human dignity. His forced exile is of extraordinary significance in that Dr. Sakharov's championing of human rights within the U.S.S.R. has commanded public attention throughout Europe and North America. In taking action against him, the Soviet authorities have made it clear that their tolerance of dissent has come to an end and that Dr. Sakharov, who carried the hopes of countless thousands both within the Soviet Union and outside it, can do so no longer. His fate, therefore, should be of the deepest concern to all free societies.

The Canadian Government insists that the Soviet Government restore Dr. Sakharov's honours and release him from his sentence of exile."