

Conclusion/Recommendation

98. A majority of the committee opposes the proposal for immediate establishment of a Canadian embassy in Managua but urges the government to monitor the opportunities that might arise. (page 114)

Response

The government will continue to monitor its need for additional representation in the light of the evolving situation and the need to promote Canadian interests. At the present time it is more cost effective to service Nicaragua from the Embassy in San José, Costa Rica. Its recently increased staff will permit even more frequent visits to Nicaragua by Canadian officials.

Conclusion/Recommendation

99. While Canadian influence over the security policies of other countries is limited, Canada has a special opportunity to offer direct, practical, and desperately needed help to the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Central America. We would urge two Canadian initiatives: establishment of a "Refugee Watch" program with other countries and non-governmental organizations to provide greater security in the refugee camps, and active support for economic development and self-sufficiency programs for refugees. The government should also strengthen Canada's capacity to monitor human rights situations in Central America, paying particular attention to the circumstances in each country and the views of Canadian non-governmental organizations in these countries. Canada should promote cooperative programs of democratic and human rights development and support elements in these countries favouring progress in human rights. (page 114)

Response

Canada supports and endorses the work of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees and would not wish to undermine or preempt the UNHCR in its work. Canada does recognize that this work could be strengthened and will discuss the idea of a refugee watch program in the camps with the multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations concerned with improving the plight of the refugees.

Canada supports economic development and self-sufficiency programs for refugees.

There has been an improvement of late in the monitoring of human rights situations in Central America through Canada's posts and more frequent contacts with non-governmental organizations working in the area. For example, on the Guatemala situation Canadian officials have contacts with the Peace Brigades International that allows Canada to observe the activities of the Grupa de Apoyo. The new Guatemalan Human Rights Advocate has visited Canada and there are consultations with the Interchurch Committee for Human Rights in Latin America. Reporting on civil and human rights records of major offenders is an integral part of our political relations program at our posts.

Promoting effective cooperative programs of democratic and human rights development is a desirable objective but where it involves support for non-governmental organizations in recipient countries its implementation requires careful study.