

Iran is a multicultural and linguistically diverse country, and tolerance of ethnic and linguistic minorities is the norm, but tough measures are used to deal with separatist movements in Iranian Kurdistan and Baluchistan.

CANADIAN POSITION

Human rights remain a priority for Canada's foreign policy toward Iran. Canada regularly raises human rights issues in meetings with Iranian government officials, in Tehran, Ottawa and in UN fora. The Canadian Embassy in Tehran also meets regularly with representatives of the Bahai, Armenian Christian and other committees to learn first hand about their human rights situation in Iran.

Canada deplores the *fatwah* against the life of Salman Rushdie. In June 1995, at the Halifax Summit, Prime Minister Chrétien and the other G-7 leaders called on Iran to, "in particular, withdraw its support from the continuing threats to the life of Salman Rushdie and others associated with his work". Canada appreciates the EU's work in urging Tehran not to organize any attempt on Rushdie's life, and we continue to stress to the Iranian government the importance of resolving this issue. Other concerns we emphasize with the Iranian government are its treatment of religious minorities, particularly the Bahais, its restrictions on women, and its attacks on Iranian dissidents abroad.

In August 1995, Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet explicitly raised our human rights concerns with the Iranian Ambassador, explaining the grounds for our concerns and the urgent need for improvement. Both in statements last March at the UN Human Rights Commission and before the 50th UNGA Third Committee in November, the Canadian delegation commented critically on the situation in Iran. At UNGA 50, Canada co-sponsored the Third Committee Resolution on the human rights situation in Iran, which expressed the international community's views and concerns.

The new UN Human Rights Commission Special Representative for Iran is a former Canadian diplomat, Mr. Maurice Copithorne. We are hopeful that the Iranian government will cooperate with him fully. We were concerned earlier that Tehran seemed to be making an official invitation to him to visit Iran conditional on the contents of the UNGA 50 Resolution on Iran, and are encouraged that Tehran has since issued an unconditional invitation for him to visit in the near future. We are also encouraged that Iran has cooperated to host visits by the UNCHR's Special Rapporteurs on Religious Intolerance and on Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

Despite our concerns about Iran's human rights situation, we acknowledge that Iran has shown considerable generosity in recent years in accepting and assisting several million Afghan, Azeri, and Iraqi Kurdish and Shiite refugees.