

Democracy/Human Rights: Trade with Rights Abusers

QUESTION

Why does Canada continue to seek to expand trade with countries that have poor human rights records?

SUGGESTED REPLY

- Canada recognizes particular human rights problems where they exist, and we use every appropriate opportunity to make our concerns known, including in meetings with leaders.
- Respect for human rights remains an important foreign policy objective. Enhancing our relations with these countries supports our efforts to promote greater respect for human rights.
- As a general rule, dialogue and engagement, rather than isolation, represent the most effective avenues for influencing governments, particularly in bilateral relations. In strengthening our relations with these countries on all levels, including more trade and investment, Canada strengthens its ability to be a positive agent and ally for change in the region.
- Canada can make a contribution to security, prosperity and overall respect for human rights through increased bilateral contact and shared technology and expertise.
- Canada has promoted human rights dialogues and provided support and legal training for government officials and law professionals in the region. We also fund the activities of many Canadian and foreign non-governmental organizations that are working to improve the status of people, especially women and children, in the region.
- Canadian projects, such as strengthening and reforming judicial structures, help to change systems that allow human rights abuses to occur.
- Canada believes that multilateral channels are often the most effective means for influencing governments. Canada has committed itself to continue to lead on human rights issues at the UN, as well as within other multilateral fora.