

Statistics on the incidence of human rights violations from the government-appointed Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and human rights NGOs, such as Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), reflect declining, though still alarming, numbers of abuses. TFDP reported 63 cases of extrajudicial execution in 1991, down from 166 in 1990. CHR reported a drop of 28% in complaints involving murder or execution, and a drop of 64% in complaints of torture (without specifying the number of cases). TFDP indicated 135 reports of torture in 1991.

Statistics on the actual number of violations in the Philippines are difficult to assess as CHR figures are often considered to be low while NGO figures are considered to be somewhat inflated. Both CHR and NGO reports, however, acknowledge the decline in serious violations.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada strongly supports the government of President Ramos and believes that the human rights situation would be much worse under any alternative regime. Canada has been pursuing and intends to pursue a strategy to maintain human rights as a priority in bilateral relations, including dialogue at the ministerial level, regular consultation with Canadian and Philippine NGO groups, cooperation between Canadian human rights institutions and their Philippine counterparts and representations on specific and illustrative human rights abuse cases across the spectrum of concerns (disappearances, internal refugees, NGO harassment and military and police brutality).

As consistent actions related to the Canadian strategy on human rights, the Canadian Embassy in Manila mounted a major effort in observing the Philippine elections both in Manila and in the provinces together with other diplomatic observers. The Embassy determined the process to be free and fair. The Embassy has also maintained contacts with CHR and human rights NGOs and closely followed the human rights situation in the Philippines. In addition, CIDA supports a number of human rights activities through NGO channels, including projects in support of rights of women and those of aboriginal peoples.

Senator Di Nino, who represented Canada at the June 30, 1992 inauguration of President Ramos, expressed the desire of the Canadian government to see improvement in Philippine human rights situation under the Ramos administration. The Secretary of State for External Affairs also expressed some concern at the July Meeting of ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in Manila with outgoing Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Manglapus, and with President Ramos.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- Do you have any information concerning the latest developments in talks between the NUC and NPC?