

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to Canada. Your presence here today is both an opportunity to rejoice in your release, but also to renew our determination to work on behalf of others who are denied their rights and freedoms.

Many people both here and elsewhere have worked hard and long to secure your release from the Soviet Union. The matter was raised regularly for more than a decade by Members of Parliament representing all Canada's parties. Your struggle has come to symbolize the fight for freedom, both in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Your release last month may have ended your fight for your own freedom, but it is just one victory in the continuing struggle for the thousands of others like you still in the USSR.

Much has been made of recent releases of political dissidents in the Soviet Union. The new Soviet leadership is said to have a better understanding of Western society and to recognize that human rights abuses give the Soviet Union a bad reputation in the West. But if the changes are to be more than mere gestures, they must be accompanied by real and sustained reforms to allow Soviet citizens to speak, to write, to move and to pray as they choose.

Unfortunately, what changes there have been to date do not go far enough. Laws against political dissent are still on the books. Political prisoners still languish in the GULAG. Freedom of expression, emigration or assembly is still curtailed or violated most brutally.

We have made it clear that better relations between Canada and the Soviet Union require progress in human rights and a lowering of barriers between East and West. Canadians believe governments that refuse to observe agreed norms of behaviour in their treatment of their own citizens cannot be trusted to observe norms of behaviour in international relations. They believe that governments that do not live up to international undertakings on human rights cannot be relied upon to keep their word in other areas such as arms control and disarmament.

The gestures that the Soviet Union has recently made on human rights are welcome because they start in the right direction. At the same time they are clearly not enough because they have changed little of substance in the system of repression.