

### *Helsinki Human Rights Day*

be put on human rights violations, not simply in Europe but throughout the world. The whole concept of human rights is far too often dealt with from an ideological perspective.

For example, the two superpowers are trying to use human rights in a very political way. The United States is able to pinpoint human rights violations in Russia and the Warsaw Pact countries and the Soviet Union is able to point to violations on the part of the United States through some of its covert activities throughout the world. In fact, both of these nations are quite right in pointing to the faults of the others, but we have to move beyond seeing human rights only from an ideological perspective and in terms of an East-West struggle. We must recognize that where human rights violations take place, whether in the East, West, North or South, they should be condemned and exposed.

We have to move away from the idea of trying to remove the speck from someone else's eye while ignoring the log in our own. We have to move away from this kind of hypocrisy. Canadians are guilty of this also.

We also need to recognize the complexity of human rights issues because sometimes what is defended as one nation's right to survive as a people becomes condemned by another nation as a violation of human rights when one nation is under a kind of siege.

We can see some of this in Canadian history. One of the most shameful incidents in Canadian history is the forcible expulsion of the Japanese from British Columbia. That was done under the provisions of the War Measures Act during World War II. That was a violation of the basic human rights of those people, many of whom were Canadian citizens. Yet it was justified by the Government of the time and the population of the time as being somehow necessitated by national survival.

More recently the imposition of the War Measures Act in the Province of Quebec in 1970 resulted in hundreds of people being arrested, many of them completely innocent of any kind of wrongdoing. That was a violation of human rights which took place under the rubric of some kind of national necessity.

We also need to recognize that the state of our world means that human rights violations are taking place in so many situations that it is almost overwhelming. How can we be aware of them all? Any spotlight that brings attention to one particular set of violations should be welcomed. However, while we might focus on one area we should not be blind or oblivious to the violations that take place in other parts of the world.

This past year the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade did a study on the development assistance policies of Canada. We issued our report entitled *For Whose Benefit?* In this report we make a strong case for linking our development assistance to the human rights policies and practices of the nations that are receiving our development

assistance. I would like to read some of the recommendations as follows:

The committee recommends:

- i) That emergency humanitarian aid continue to be given on compassionate grounds without preconditions, but that it be monitored closely to prevent abuses;

Even in situations where there are abuses, where there are compassionate needs, emergency needs such as following an earthquake or something of that nature, there would be emergency assistance.

The committee further recommended:

- ii) That the victims of human rights violations not be forgotten when decisions are taken to reduce or delay long-term development aid to governments;

Since we cannot support bilateral aid to governments that violate human rights, we have to remember the individual victims within those countries.

Third, the committee recommended:

- iii) That human rights criteria be developed coherently as part of overall Canadian foreign policy, and that these be applied in a universal, consistent and transparent manner;

In other words, we don't want one set of human rights criteria to be used for development assistance and another set of criteria to be used when we are developing military alliances or trade negotiations.

Fourth, the committee recommended:

- iv) That such criteria, embracing both individual, civil and political rights and socio-economic and cultural rights, be derived from established standards of international human rights law and convention;

It is very important that when we talk about human rights we not only talk about civil and political rights as we understand them in the western democracies, but that we also emphasize the importance of socio-economic rights. What do human rights mean to a child growing up in Mozambique, for example, a country which has been left poor from four centuries of Portuguese colonialism? They are under constant stress and threats from the destabilizing efforts of the South African Government. What do human rights mean to a child growing up in Mozambique? Do they not appear in the form of milk, food, education and a safe shelter, rather than in whether or not someone can run for a legislature, although that is also important? Next it reads:

● (1320)

That verifiable reports of violations, not ideology or strategic interest, be the basis for unfavourable assessments of human rights observance;

In other words, it is not a question of ideology but of objective description. Organizations such as Amnesty International try to provide that kind of evaluation of human rights. Groups such as that must be supported. It goes on to read:

That, more generally, progress on human rights be considered part of development, with assessments of the human rights situation in a given country being related to the over-all record of development, particularly from the vantage point of the poorest people.