

Canada's Role in the Protection of Civil and Political Rights

Through the Organization of American States

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(Rapporteur's summary)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was established in 1959 as an organ of the Organization of American States under the OAS charter; it also administers the American Convention on Human Rights, which has been ratified by most member states, but not by the United States, Canada, and a number of Caribbean countries.

Canada does good bilateral work on human rights; but it should not act multilaterally in a way that could damage human rights, such as underwriting Inter-American Bank financing projects that violate human rights. Canada should speak out more on human rights. The commission's standing would be strengthened if countries like Canada and the United States would ratify the American Convention on Human Rights.

Cuba should not be allowed to swallow up the debate on human rights in the Americas; there are plenty of other offenders. There has been backsliding by some member countries from the earlier advance toward more democratic regimes. The NGOs are the leading engine of the inter-American rights system.