

# Canada Weekly

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## Plea for United Nations to find solutions to gross violations of human rights

*The establishment of a position of an Under-Secretary General for Human Rights was proposed by Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, in her first address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 25.*

*In a speech that dealt mainly with human rights, Miss MacDonald warned that the UN was in "serious jeopardy of becoming irrelevant to the peoples of the world", because the "very" purpose of the UN had somehow been lost. "We have lost our grasp of the human needs that the UN was established to help fill, and of the human rights that it is meant to protect," she said.*

*Passages from Miss MacDonald's address follow:*

...The United Nations must find better, more certain ways to deal with gross violations of human rights, no matter where they happen. We must be able to take effective action immediately, not years after the abuses begin. That is why Canada has long supported the proposal to establish the office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. This proposal, which could effectively set in place an international human rights ombudsman, has been explored over the years, but as yet not enough member states have found the courage to proceed with such an office.

Let me propose an alternative, then. This session of the General Assembly should agree to establish a position of Under-Secretary General for Human Rights, and we should appoint an individual of undisputed stature in the international community to that office. This person would exercise the mandate the Secretary-General has under the Charter, to use his good offices in the human rights field. With this, we would have an instrument through which the United Nations could fulfil this fundamental responsibility given to it by the people of the world.

Another step that could easily be taken is to devise a way of ending the distressingly large numbers of disappearances of individuals in many parts of the world. We urge that the Human Rights Commission be instructed to set up a committee of experts to investigate these unexplained vanishings.

We must not take the progress that has been made as an indication that our job is done. Outrages still exist. Some are long-standing, like *apartheid*, and the situations in Namibia and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Others, such as political executions, arise from time to time in various parts of the world. We must find new ways of combating these violations, for world opinion demands it. Unless we can respond, our credibility, our relevance, our usefulness, our very existence are in peril.

But our response must be both re-

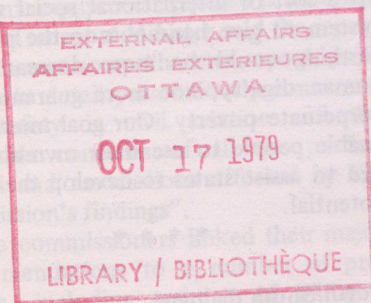


United Nations

*External Affairs Minister Flora MacDonald at a press conference following her first address to the UN General Assembly.*

*Nine years ago this week...*

External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp announced that Canada would officially recognize the People's Republic of China as of October 13, 1970.



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