

- BUT THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHER COUNTRIES IS IN FACT OFTEN DIFFERENT, PARTLY BECAUSE THEY MAY NOT BE WESTERN OR DEMOCRATIC IN BACKGROUND, OR PARTLY BECAUSE THEIR ECONOMIC SITUATIONS ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT THAN OURS.
- WESTERN DEMOCRACIES TRADITIONALLY ACCORD PRIORITY TO CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, WHILE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES OFTEN PLACE THEIR PRESSING ECONOMIC NEEDS AHEAD OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES.
- IT MAY SEEM CALLOUS OR INSENSITIVE TO CANADIANS, BUT WE ARE TOLD REGULARLY IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES THAT A MAJORITY OF UNDER-DEVELOPED STATES ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH ALLEVIATING STARVATION AND PROMOTING THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND, IN SO DOING, ATTACHING A GREATER PRIORITY TO THE DUTIES OF CITIZENS THAN TO THEIR RIGHTS.
- ALTHOUGH CANADA'S APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS REFLECTS OUR TRADITIONS - THE ETHICS AND MORAL CODES OF A WESTERN CHRISTIAN SOCIETY - OUR APPROACH IS ONLY ONE OF MANY, AND, I SHOULD ADD, NOT AN APPROACH WHICH ENJOYS MAJORITY SUPPORT INTERNATIONALLY.
- THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS NOT A BINDING LEGAL INSTRUMENT, AND OTHER COVENANTS AND CONVENTIONS WHICH MAY HAVE ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS ARE BINDING ONLY UPON THEIR SIGNATORIES.
- EVEN WHEN A STATE ACCEDES TO A CONVENTION OR SIGNS AN AGREEMENT, IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT IT ACCEPTS ITS OBLIGATIONS IMMEDIATELY. NOT ALL THE PARTIES WHO SIGNED THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT FEEL BOUND TO ACCEPT ITS PROVISIONS AT ONCE; RATHER, IT IS REGARDED AS A LONG-TERM PROGRAMME TOWARDS WHICH PARTICIPANTS SHOULD STRIVE.
- MOREOVER, EVEN WHEN STATES DISREGARD THEIR OBLIGATIONS THERE IS FREQUENTLY LITTLE THAT CAN BE DONE TO URGE COMPLIANCE. THE U.N. COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS A FAIRLY CUMBERSOME PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GROSS AND PERSISTENT VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WHILE OTHER BODIES, LIKE THE NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, ON WHICH THERE IS A CANADIAN, AND THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, CONSIST OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS SERVING IN THEIR PERSONAL CAPACITIES; THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT, AS SUCH, CAN THEREFORE TAKE NO OFFICIAL ACTION IN THESE BODIES.