

1995 and July 1996, the Human Rights Ombudswoman's office reported 197 violations of the right to life, some by "irregular armed groups." Most of these groups appear to be criminal in nature, but concern was aroused in mid-1996 by the resurfacing of a potential death squad the "Fuerza Nacionalista Mayor Roberto D'Aubuisson", which made threats against public figures (including the Ombudswoman).

Although social spending as a proportion of government expenditures has risen, over half the population lives in poverty, 30% in extreme poverty, and has not generally benefitted greatly from the economic growth of recent years. The "maquila" sector has been a continuing source of allegations of harassment of union activists and of violations of worker's rights, including the right to organize. The Government continues to apply a low wage policy and increases in the minimum wage have not kept pace with inflation, although it should be noted that the official minimum wage of US \$131 per month is the highest in the region. While government spending on education has risen and modernization of the educational system has begun, El Salvador is starting from a very low level of achievement and high illiteracy.

Although women's rights organizations are active and consciousness of the factors contributing to the violation of women's rights is increasing, there has been little change in practice. Violation of women's rights in El Salvador is attributable to violence in the family, to discrimination in the workplace and to limited property rights. The exploitation and abuse of children, as well as the number of children working, are increasingly acknowledged as problems. The Government believes that its "Escuela saludable" program, which improves nutrition and basic health care for primary school children, is encouraging many parents to keep young children in school. Although the rights of the disabled are not constitutionally protected, El Salvador's civil war left a large number of disabled and groups advocating their rights are increasingly well organized. Programs for war disabled are now in place, but those not eligible have protested actively.

Aboriginal people constitute about 3% of El Salvador's population. Anonymous threats and harassment of the leadership of the Salvadoran National Association of Indigenous People (ANIS) during 1996 appear related to ongoing land disputes.

### **CANADIAN POSITION**

The Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), the Ambassador and other senior officials have reiterated the importance Canada attaches to respect for human rights, full implementation of the Peace Accords and continued democratic development in meetings with the El Salvadoran President, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Public Security and the Ombudswoman for Human Rights. Individual cases are followed through the Office of the Canadian Embassy in El Salvador. CIDA's Social Reconstruction Fund, with its three target themes of human rights, democratic development and poverty reduction, has supported projects dealing with violence against women, child support, voter education, job-related training for the handicapped (particularly, victims of anti-personnel mines), human rights education in the schools, and promoting community-motivated youth groups. The Canada Fund for Local initiatives supports grass-roots projects including in human rights.

At the 52nd Session of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Third Committee of the 51st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the interventions of the