

government agencies to "purchase" favourable stories in the media, although individual journalists have been subject to pressure, even murder. There is now a vigorous human rights NGO community: NGOs have requested funding, equipment, and technical assistance from foreign counterparts.

Mexican elections have been characterized by irregularities and violence. After 65 years of virtual monopoly rule, government electoral reform has begun to have an effect. Opposition parties now hold three state governorships, and over 4,000 of 19,000 local offices. Nevertheless, the most recent state elections in the Yucatan were reportedly characterized by abuses, and are the subject of continuing political controversy. Since Mexico does not yet permit international election observers, even informally, it is difficult to reach a fair judgement on government and opposition claims. While press reforms and greater competition among newspapers has begun to afford the opposition greater media access, the government still has strong ties to powerful private media barons, and leverage from government advertising budgets.

The government and the ruling PRI party have made serious efforts to promote a more open, functioning democracy in Mexico. In 1990, the Federal Elections Institute was established to run elections, with representation from the opposition parties on its General Board, and its own separate bureaucracy to promote independence from the government bureaucracy. The Minister of the Interior still has an oversight role in the Institute's affairs. In 1991, Mexico began establishing a modern electoral registration and identification system. There are now election spending limits, and controls on campaign contributions which will be in effect in 1994. These institutions will be tested for the first time in the 1994 Presidential election. In the meantime, the PRI candidate Luis Colosio has underlined his commitment to free and fair elections. The Constitution has been amended to guarantee opposition parties increased representation in the Senate, and their role has been accorded due legitimacy in various legislative bodies, including the powerful Mexico City council.

CANADIAN POSITION

The Prime Minister, and Canadian Ministers and officials have regularly expressed support for the reform process underway, and urged Mexico to press forward. The Chief Electoral Officer, Chair of the Human Rights Commission, and Ed Broadbent of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development have visited Mexico to exchange views on how progress can be achieved. Officials from Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute and the National Human Rights Commission, have visited Canada. The Canadian and Mexican delegations have worked closely over the past year toward the creation of the office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Canadian Embassy maintains regular contacts with Mexican human rights NGOs, and has funded NGO projects. 70% of the beneficiaries of the Embassy Canada Fund are women. Mexican NGOs have sought closer ties with Canadian counterparts for Canadian funding and technical assistance, but they stress that Mexico's problems are for Mexicans to solve.

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