

I have just returned from a visit to the Afghan refugee camps near Peshawar in North Western Pakistan. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is as contemptible today as it was in 1979 when I first expressed outrage on behalf of the Canadian government.

Over 20% of the population of Afghanistan have been killed or forced to flee. Families have been cruelly separated; children - thousands of them orphaned; women and men have been driven from their homes into exile. Last week I witnessed their resolute determination to return to their country and to rebuild their lives.

We congratulate Pakistan for its unselfish efforts to help these millions of people. Canada will maintain its humanitarian support for the refugees. The work of the UNHCR and Red Cross also deserves praise.

Afghanistan is experiencing the gross violation of its sovereignty by a neighbouring superpower. The Karmal regime that has been installed in Afghanistan has no legitimacy. It must give way to a government that represents the will of the people of Afghanistan. Only then will there be peace in that proud and ancient land.

We commend efforts to achieve a political solution for Afghanistan and fully support the work to this end by the Secretary General of the United Nations and his personal representative.

Canada believes it is essential that the Soviet Union end its military occupation of Afghanistan and help create the conditions for the formation of a genuine national government. We must not lose sight of the continuing oppression of the people of Afghanistan by this six-year long Soviet occupation.