

How Canadians Approach Their Foreign Policy

Major Concerns of Canadians

Promoting Human Rights and Development

Many witnesses called for a more significant human rights component in Canadian foreign policy. Several groups advocating this point of view, such as the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, criticized the passing reference to human rights in the Green Paper and proceeded to argue that

human rights [should] be, and appear to be, one of the main principles and co-determinants of Canada foreign policy, if not also the soul and substance of that policy. (47:69)

A few submissions supported the appointment of one or more officers or groups within the federal government to promote human rights abroad. Others advocated review by a parliamentary committee of human rights performance abroad.

Much more frequently, however, witnesses with human rights concerns argued for specific Canadian policies with regard to South Africa and Central America. In both situations the primary justification for Canadian intervention was that the governments involved were systematically, consistently and grossly violating human rights. With regard to South Africa, a sizable minority of the submissions maintained that developments in South Africa were an internal affair and should be of no concern to Canada. Most submissions on Central America, by contrast, had common characteristics: criticism of U.S. policy in the region and advocacy of a larger role by the Canadian government including, frequently, opening an embassy in Nicaragua. A few witnesses expressed concern about the policies of the Nicaraguan government and its treatment of the Miskito Indians.