

In Haiti and the Philippines, the departure of dictators has seen the release of political prisoners and holds out the promise of an end to persistent violations of human rights in those countries.

Iran has been publicly rebuked in the U.N. for failing to respond to allegations of torture, extra-judicial killings, religious persecution and mistreatment of ethnic minorities.

Even in the Soviet bloc, there has also been some movement.

Anatoly Shcharansky has been released from detention in the Soviet Union and allowed to emigrate to Israel, while Elena Bonner - the wife of Dr. Sakharov - has been permitted to seek medical attention in the West.

The situation in Afghanistan has once again been roundly condemned by a very large majority of the members of the U.N. General Assembly.

International attention has continued to focus on the deplorable condition of Kampuchians suffering under foreign occupation and abuse, and on the so-called "re-education camps" of the occupying power, Vietnam.

Meanwhile, at Nairobi, the Conference marking the end of the U.N. Decade for Women has mapped out a strategy for improving the status of women over the next fifteen years. And in Geneva, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights has made good progress on a draft convention on the rights of the child.

In cataloguing some of the movement which has taken place on human rights in the last year, it is clear that much remains to be done - not only by those guilty of human rights abuses but also by those who recognize that it is in their longer-term interest to improve the human condition throughout the world. But let it not be thought that for countries such as Canada it is a simple question of being more vocal. The only real test of a nation's commitment to human rights is the effort it makes to achieve practical results.

To achieve practical results requires, in the first instance, examination of the problem.

In some cases, rights and freedoms are denied consciously and systematically for reasons of state. In the case of South Africa, a unique form of legalized racial discrimination is written into the Constitution and implemented through a host of supporting rules and regulations passed by legislators who are fully aware of what they are doing. In other cases, rights are guaranteed in law but severely limited in practice. In the