

Human rights groups have reported that Soviet and Afghan forces have adopted a policy of extrajudicial executions of Afghan refugees attempting to leave the country, and of Afghan civilians in retaliation for acts by the Mujahideen. Reports also indicate that the practice of torture is on-going, as is forced conscription into the military of political prisoners released after general amnesties.

The Special Rapporteur's latest report stressed that the human rights situation closely reflects the political context in the country. He regards the Afghan people's right to self-determination as a human rights question, and has stated that the withdrawal of Soviet troops is a pre-condition for the establishment of respect for human rights in the country and for the return of refugees.

The Special Rapporteur noted that although the number of political prisoners had fallen, and prison conditions had improved, allegations of torture and the ill-treatment of prisoners were still being received. He concluded that the planting of mines and booby-trap bombs, which is still continuing, represented a major impediment to reconstruction and the return of refugees, as well as a threat to the right to life. It is estimated that as many as 30 million mines may have been laid in Afghanistan in the nine years since the Soviet invasion.

CANADIAN POSITION:

Canada has consistently denounced the widespread and continuing violations of human rights in Afghanistan, as well as the loss of more than a million lives in the war to date. We were again a cosponsor of the General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, which was adopted without a vote on December 8.

Canada welcomed the signature of the Geneva Accords, although we expressed concern that they did not include a ceasefire, nor an agreement on the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan. We support the continuing efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and the parties to the conflict to achieve the political solution which we believe is necessary for there to be a durable restoration of human rights practices in Afghanistan.

As its contribution to the massive international relief effort which will be required in Afghanistan, Canada has pledged \$22 million over the next two years for the repatriation and rehabilitation of Afghan refugees. This is in addition to the \$19 million each year which the Canadian government provides to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan.