

1994. Again, there has been little positive intervention by the authorities. With regard to the Zapatista conflict, there has been substantial progress towards a mutually satisfactory negotiated solution; in late 1996 the rebels were in direct dialogue with the federal government regarding significant constitutional changes, and in early January 1997 the government, in a gesture of goodwill, released seven alleged Zapatistas.

In recent years there have been a number of well-documented attacks on homosexuals - including a set of murders in Tuxtla Gutierrez- that would seem, in part at least, to have been based on the victims' sexual orientation; however, in a context where police investigation of grave crimes is often inadequate, it is difficult to be sure whether there has been special negligence in the investigation of these cases.

During his June 1996 visit to Canada, President Zedillo held an unprecedented meeting with Canadian NGO activists so as to hear their concerns personally.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canadian ministers have in 1996 taken advantage of their contacts with their Mexican counterparts to raise human rights issues on a number of occasions. The Prime Minister discussed human rights issues with President Zedillo while the latter was in Canada, and Minister Axworthy has discussed the question with his counterpart on two occasions. Secretary of State Stewart met not only with the National Human Rights Commissioner and with the Attorney General when she visited Mexico City in late 1996 but with representatives of key Mexican human rights NGOs.

The case of a Chiapas-based Canadian priest who has been denied re-entry to Mexico was raised by the Prime Minister but remains unresolved. The individual concerned has appealed his non-admission before the Mexican courts; a speedy resolution is not expected.

Our respective National Human Rights Commissions signed a bilateral cooperation agreement in October 1995. Then-Canadian Human Rights Commissioner Max Yalden visited Mexico in November 1996 to discuss modalities of cooperation. Activities will centre on technical cooperation: exchanges of software and databases, internships, and cooperation in designing regionally-targeted human rights courses.

Also with the support of CIDA regional funding (there is no bilateral CIDA programme with Mexico), a modest programme of assistance to help Mexico's police develop its forensic capacities began in late 1996. Through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, the Canadian Embassy in Mexico supports the activities of various Mexican human rights NGOs. Current or planned activities include:

- Human rights training workshops, executed by Mexican NGOs, in the Federal District and Veracruz, Puebla, Oaxaca and Tabasco states;
- In cooperation with Amnesty International, publication and distribution of an activity guide, human rights-related, for primary school teachers;
- In Morelos State, publication and distribution of didactic material on human rights, targeted at aboriginal communities.