

I want to impress this on the whites of South Africa. Although we will be the majority, that doesn't mean the minority will lose their power, their participation, their economic life. I believe that the whites here, unlike anywhere else in Africa, belong here. This is their home. We want to share that home, and share power with them.

Central America

The third case of human rights to which we turn our attention—Central America—presents yet another pattern of gross and persistent human rights violations. It is estimated that some 150,000 to 200,000 people have been killed over the past decade through repression and civil war in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In turn, this violence has generated an estimated 1.5 to 2 million refugees, roughly 10 per cent of the population of the region. In addition, there has been widespread economic destruction, which, together with international economic pressures, has pushed Central America to the brink of economic collapse. This suffering has given rise to widespread international concern, a concern that is shared by large numbers of Canadians.

The committee received more submissions on Central America than on any other single subject. A remarkably large number of witnesses had first-hand experience in this area, often as aid workers or members of visiting delegations, and spoke with greater conviction and knowledge as a result. Many of the briefs pointed to Canada's special interest in promoting human rights in Central America, including the concern for refugees, development assistance programs in the region, and the negative effects of regional instability on the western hemisphere. The briefs and submissions expressed the concern—which we share—that human rights violations in Central America arise from the failure of economic development, the frequent absence of political alternatives to dictatorships and military régimes, social upheaval, increasing cycles of violence, and external intervention.

In trying to arrive at a fair and balanced understanding of the crisis in Central America, we were guided by the earlier work of the Sub-committee on Canada's Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. The words of its 1982 report are as true today as they were when they were written:

The mounting violence in Central America, which is threatening to engulf the entire region, arises primarily from internal causes. It is, however, reinforced and spread by the injection of outside ideological concerns and by the provision of military assistance to both repressive governments and revolutionary groups. Far from promoting stability, the policies of neighbouring countries tend to perpetuate and intensify instability.

The Sub-committee recognized that Central America and the Caribbean are of vital importance to the United States and to the western alliance. Efforts should be made to protect these regions from superpower rivalries. The independence of all countries should be respected, and outside military involvement from whatever source should cease. (*Final Report*, pp. 11-12)

Since that report was written, the situation has evolved. Many witnesses expressed the view that, in the interval, U.S. policy has contributed to massive militarization of Central America and thereby to widespread and chronic human rights abuses. They advocated a more active role for Canada in criticizing the U.S. administration's support for the Contras, and most briefs included a recommendation that Canada open an embassy in Managua. The witnesses went on to say that, in its search for a military solution to what is essentially a set of social and economic problems, the U.S.