

Displaced Persons. This includes support for dissemination by the UN of the RSG's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. These principles seek to provide guidance relevant to protecting and assisting displaced populations, and constitute an important contribution to international efforts to address this issue. Developing strategies for prevention, protection and assistance, supporting fact-finding missions, promoting effective field-level co-ordination, and advancing research and advocacy are also key to progress and are areas where Canada is fully engaged.

Human Rights Field Operations

Widespread, systematic violations of human rights frequently trigger violent conflict. Conversely, commitments to respect human rights contribute importantly to establishing the climate of trust required to negotiate or implement ceasefires and peace agreements.

Human rights field operations (HRFOs) give the international community an important means of preventing and resolving conflict by providing a mechanism to monitor respect for human rights, verify compliance with peace accords and help build local capacity for human rights protection. HRFOs have made important contributions in such places as Cambodia, East Timor, El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti. Still, further action is required. Canada will focus on the training and deployment of civilian human rights experts to take part in peace support operations. Also important will be expanding the use of HRFOs for early warning and conflict prevention, improving co-ordination between human rights monitoring and peacekeeping efforts, and promoting closer ties between these field operations and development agencies and host societies.

Landmines

The widespread use of anti-personnel mines has a direct impact on the

West Africa: Child Protection

In April 2000, at the West African Conference on War-Affected Children, countries of that sub-region came together to endorse the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action. One of the principal commitments made in Accra was to create an institutional focal point for the protection of children within the West African regional organization ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). Canada will provide support for creating this child protection unit, which will monitor the human rights situation of children in areas of conflict and help rehabilitate and reintegrate these children during post-conflict peacebuilding. This initiative will also include efforts to build capacity within West Africa for child protection at the national and regional levels through ECOWAS.

security of individuals. These weapons endure for decades after conflicts end and do not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. Their use has created a humanitarian crisis in dozens of countries, impeding the return of refugees and preventing the use of productive land in some of the poorest countries.

In December 1997, the majority of the world's countries joined Canada in signing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. On March 1, 1999, the "Ottawa" Convention entered into force, and within one year 94 states had agreed to be legally bound by it. Notwithstanding this progress, however, work must continue. The Convention must be implemented effectively to ensure that mined land is cleared, mine victims must receive assistance and rehabilitation, and support for the ban itself must be universalized. Through the Canadian Landmine Fund, and in partnership with others, Canada is exercising continued commitment and supporting mine action activities in places such as Bosnia, Cambodia, Ecuador, Kosovo, Mozambique, Peru and Central America.

Humanitarian Intervention

There can be no doubt that preventive, non-coercive action is always the preferable approach to averting violent conflict. However, where humanitarian crises occur — or threaten to occur — they constitute profound threats to the safety and security of people and demand an effective international response. This is the clear lesson from the tragedies in Rwanda and Srebrenica.

The willingness and the ability of the international community to use all the tools at its disposal — from political engagement to military action — to address egregious threats to human security is an integral, if controversial, element of the human security agenda. NATO action in Kosovo sparked an important debate regarding appropriate frameworks for military intervention to achieve humanitarian objectives. Canada supports the UN Secretary-General's contention that no legal principle, not even sovereignty, can ever shield crimes against humanity. To help build international understanding of the legitimate circumstances for humanitarian intervention, Canada is proposing the creation of an independent international commission on intervention and state sovereignty.

Two Vietnamese girls peer out from a barbed wire fence in the Sikhiu refugee camp northeast of Bangkok. (1997)



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