

conditions, etc.). In 1995, the Sri Lankan Criminal Code was amended to include a broader definition of, and more severe penalties for rape. However, these positive changes do not seem to be applied in the conflict zone. The Government must apply the existing laws rigorously if women's rights are to be protected.

While the Government is primarily responsible for protecting the rights of its citizens, the human rights abuses by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) should not be minimized. The latter's performance in this area gives cause for concern. The list of abuses is a long one, including summary executions, attacks on isolated villages, terrorist acts against civilian populations, hostage-takings, executions, the use of children as combatants, etc.

The Commission on Human Rights has taken no official position on Sri Lanka since 1995, although Canada has actively discussed the issue. In August 1997, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions visited the country; his report should be tabled at the Commission's next session.

CANADIAN POSITION

Encouraging dialogue, seeking peaceful solutions, advocating human rights and condemning acts of terrorism have been central to our position in Sri Lanka from the outset. The Canadian Government has worked constructively with various human rights organizations in Sri Lanka, and intends to continue doing so. Bilaterally, we have given notice of our position by discontinuing bilateral aid and channelling it through NGOs. We have taken every opportunity to express our concerns and our willingness to help promote a human rights culture in Sri Lanka, for example by reinforcing existing human rights mechanisms. Multilaterally, we have raised the human rights situation in Sri Lanka in appropriate UN fora, such as the UN General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and plan to continue doing so.

Canada is concerned by this continuing conflict, by the absence of peaceful solutions and by the effect of this situation on human rights. We will encourage the Sri Lankan Government to continue its efforts to find a peaceful solution, taking into account the interests of the public at large. For its part, the LTTE must respect human rights and help to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. We encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that institutions responsible for protecting human rights are able to function independently and effectively. We encourage it to continue its efforts to have government organizations take their human rights responsibilities seriously.

We realize that the war in Sri Lanka continues to be a major source of human rights violations and unfortunately, with the continuation of hostilities, the situation will probably continue to be of concern. However, parties to the conflict are fully responsible for ensuring that human rights are protected. Widespread use of exceptional measures and indiscriminate violence will do nothing to help establish an environment favourable to respect for human rights.