

The Soviet constitution specifically guarantees the right of Soviet citizens to profess any religion and to conduct religious worship. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Madrid Concluding Document go even further by stipulating that inherent in religious freedom is the right to manifest it in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

Nobody denies that Jews in the USSR are Soviet citizens. Nobody denies that Judaism is a religion. Nobody denies that the Soviet Union has freely and willingly entered into these international agreements. And yet, Soviet Jews are, for all intents and purposes, denied their right to practice and to teach their religion.

The Soviet Constitution commits the Soviet Union to uphold its obligations under international law and to adhere to the principles of its international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some of these agreements guarantee the right to emigrate. We all remember those heady days in the late 1970's when thousands of Jews were allowed to emigrate every month. Now we're lucky if a thousand Jews emigrate in an entire year. In fact, there are signs that 1986 may be the year when the least number of Jews are allowed to leave the USSR.

The Soviet Constitution guarantees Soviet citizens the right to work, including the right to choose their trade or profession. And yet, many refuseniks suffer the double blow of being denied permission to go, and then being prohibited from continuing to work in their old jobs, forcing them to take on menial tasks or depend upon their friends for subsistence.

The issue for us, therefore, is confidence in Soviet compliance. If the Soviet Union is unwilling to adhere to the provisions of its own constitution, how are we to have any confidence that they will uphold their international obligations, including arms control and disarmament agreements? Canada takes the position that human rights form an integral part of customary international law. Indeed, General Secretary Gorbachev has acknowledged that human rights are integral to comprehensive security. And at the Human Rights Experts Meeting in Ottawa last year, the Soviet representative conceded that human rights are a legitimate object of international concern.