

## Canada's Human Security Agenda: The Least We Could Do

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Since the Liberal Government's 1994/95 foreign policy review, and reflecting strong and principled voices that took part in that review, the discourse and practice of human security has been front and centre in the foreign policy agenda of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

In practice, the government has undertaken a number of human security initiatives and is participating in others.

- Canada was instrumental in bringing to fruition, through the Ottawa Process, the Anti-Personnel Land Mine Convention. The convention bans the use of anti-personnel land mines worldwide. It obligates states to destroy stockpiles, remove the weapons from where they have been implanted throughout the globe, and assist in rehabilitating landmine victims and their societies.
- The government is a key player together with a range of non-governmental organizations and international governmental organizations in efforts to control the use, movement and proliferation of small arms and light weapons throughout the world.
- Ottawa was also a key player in establishing the framework for the International Criminal Court.
- It is active in addressing the issues of child soldiers and children as victims of armed conflict

As a direct result of the foreign policy review, government has also established a Global and Human Issues Bureau responsible for a (if not the) range of issues associated with human security. The Bureau shares interests with the human security work that is on-going within the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA also being responsible for administering Canada's Peacebuilding Initiative, which came into existence in 1996

Much of this activity has been under the tutelage of our soon to be ex-minister of foreign affairs Lloyd Axworthy, who has articulated what human security is about in a number of forums both here in Canada and elsewhere in the world, including the United Nations.

Human security, he has said, "includes security against economic privation, an acceptable quality of life, and a guarantee of fundamental human rights". Pursuing these ends requires "the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity".<sup>1</sup> The point of human security initiatives, he argues, is to "put in place the minimal conditions under which a country can take charge of its destiny, and social, political and economic development become possible".<sup>2</sup>