

There was a time in the histories of our two countries when our views on human rights converged. I am speaking of 1948, when both our countries were signatories to the United Nations universal Declaration of Human Rights. Your great wartime leader, Jan Smuts, helped write that declaration.

Canada has not been without its own pressures and strains on the rights of its citizens since 1948. We have worked hard on defining and, more importantly, on giving life to those rights, and we continue to work to find accommodations that allow Canadians to live their lives to their full potential, in peace and with dignity.

No country is immune to the baser forces which can erode its integrity from within. But nations must also speak out when they believe that the human rights of an individual or group beyond their own borders are threatened.

Canada's position with regard to South Africa has always been clear. John Diefenbaker spoke for Canada when he declared in 1961 that we would not accept apartheid in any form. We have been active and vocal in the international campaign to bring democracy to all the inhabitants of South Africa ever since.

We have spoken out vigorously at the United Nations and in the Commonwealth. We sharply curtailed official bilateral relations.

We sustained contact with the leadership of the mass movement, in exile and here in South Africa, offering solidarity, education, legal aid and technical co-operation. And we actively encouraged the freedom of the press, financing part of the struggle against censorship.

We also promoted sanctions, a measure that gives no joy or comfort to anyone.

Sanctions are a blunt instrument, a crude mechanism designed to induce change, often at enormous cost to trade, investment and employment in the countries involved.

There are also very real and very high social costs to sanctions -- the loss of human contact, broken family ties and disruption in the free flow of ideas, cultural enrichment, and the sharing of experiences and values.

A woman I spoke to on the weekend who had obviously weathered the "economic" impacts of sanctions quite well, spoke of the "isolation" that she felt, as fewer and fewer people came to visit, to debate, to perform, to stimulate or to share.